



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

LETTERS TO
UNKNOWN
FRIENDS



LYMAN ABBOTT

Library
of the
University of Wisconsin

LETTERS TO UNKNOWN FRIENDS

LETTERS TO UNKNOWN FRIENDS

BY
DR. LYMAN ABBOTT



GARDEN CITY NEW YORK
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY
1913

Copyright, 1913, by
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY

*All rights reserved, including that of
translation into foreign languages,
including the Scandinavian*

COPYRIGHT, 1912, BY THE OUTLOOK COMPANY

178996

NOV -5 1913

CD

AB23

PREFACE

For a number of years I have been carrying on a somewhat extensive pastoral correspondence and, in connection with my preaching, somewhat extensive pastoral conferences. For the last twelve years most of my preaching has been at colleges, and in connection with this college preaching I have held conferences with students, sometimes in groups, sometimes individually. In these conferences they have brought me their perplexities. The questions which they have presented have been sometimes theological, sometimes ethical, sometimes spiritual, but they have almost always been vital; that is, they have been questions touching the conduct of life, inspired by the desire to know how to live, not questions touching merely opinion, inspired by curiosity to know what I think. The letters which I have received from all over the country

have been of a similar type, and it has been a very enjoyable, and a not insignificant part of my life, to carry on this correspondence with Unknown Friends who have often, I think, written to me with the greater freedom because they were unknown to me, and thus they were not really disclosing any secrets of their experiences. These letters and conferences have been of invaluable service to me in enabling me to understand and to deal with the vital experiences.

They have been serviceable to me for another reason: They have often compelled me to question my own traditional beliefs and to find a reason which I could give to another for a hope which had not been founded on reason, but on an inherited habit of mind. That I have clearer and more definite conceptions of both theological and spiritual problems, yes, and of ethical problems also, is largely due to the service which these correspondents have rendered by compelling me to investigate the questions which they have addressed to me.

It finally occurred to me that the questions

which these correspondents were asking were questions which a great many others were asking, though they knew not where to go for an answer, and that the letters which I was sending to these correspondents might, if somewhat elaborated, render service to other inquirers. So about a year ago I began in the *Outlook* a series of "Letters to Unknown Friends." Through the doorway thus opened many unknown friends entered, seeking counsel, and when it was proposed to me to put into book form some of these letters, in the hope that they might reach a still wider circle of readers, I gladly accepted the suggestion. Many but not all of the letters contained in this volume have been published in the *Outlook*. All of them have been written in reply to real inquiries addressed to me either by letter or in person. The many responses from readers of these letters in the *Outlook* have been at once the best confirmation of my hope that they might be serviceable, and the best reward for the work involved. And this little book goes out with the sincere hope on my part that it may find its way

to other inquirers and render this service to other
Unknown Friends.

LYMAN ABBOTT.

Cornwall on Hudson, N. Y.

January 1, 1913.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	v
MY CONFESSION OF FAITH	3
A PERSONAL GOD	16
NATURE AND THE GOSPEL	23
ARE THERE THREE GODS?	29
THE GAME OF LIFE	35
CAN I LOVE GOD?	41
RESTING IN GOD	46
TEMPTATION — STRUGGLE — VICTORY	51
PRAYER	59
THE SECOND COMING	63
A SERENE SPIRIT IN A STRENUOUS AGE	71
THE PRIVILEGE OF BEING A MINISTER	82
LIFE PREACHING	89
RELIGIOUS CONVERSATION	97
THE SABBATH PROBLEM	108
CREATIVE EVOLUTION	120
WHY	131
THE BIBLE AND THE CHILD	138
THE MINISTER AND THE CREED	142
FUTURE PUNISHMENT	151
DOES HIS MERCY ENDURE FOREVER?	161

LETTERS TO UNKNOWN FRIENDS

I

MY CONFESSION OF FAITH

A NUMBER of my Unknown Friends have asked me for my personal beliefs on certain fundamental questions, such as, Do I believe:

In a personal God?

In the divinity of Jesus Christ?

In his resurrection?

In the miracles?

In the inspiration of the Bible?

I have from time to time answered these questions more than once in the pages of the *Outlook*, and old readers of this journal may pass this article by without missing anything with which they are not already familiar. But I remember that the readers of the *Outlook* are constantly changing, that new readers are coming into our family circle who are interested to know

4 LETTERS TO UNKNOWN FRIENDS

what I think about these questions, and I here attempt to give them a brief but measurably comprehensive answer.

It might be sufficient to answer, categorically: Yes, I do believe in a personal God; in the divinity of Jesus Christ; in his resurrection; in the miracles; in the inspiration of the Bible. But such categorical reply would be understood in different ways by different readers, because these phrases mean different things to different readers. I therefore avoid the categorical reply, and set forth here my Christian faith, as far as possible, in non-theological terms.

In January, 1890, I was installed as pastor of Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, and the Rev. Howard S. Bliss was at the same time ordained and installed as my associate in the pastorate. On this occasion there was gathered a large and representative council of Congregational churches, with members of other denominations present and coöperating, including representatives of the Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Baptist communions. At this council I made a statement

of my faith, and in this answer to my Unknown Friends I follow closely the statement which I then made. There are two advantages in pursuing this course. In the first place, my correspondents will be sure that I am not modifying my faith in order to meet their questions — though in some respects I modify the statement in order to make my answer at certain points more explicit. In the second place, they may be sure that my faith represents a large body of thinkers in the evangelical Protestant churches, since my statement at the council was approved, with only one dissenting voice.

My faith in God rests on my faith in Christ as God manifest in the flesh — not as God *and* man, but as God *in* man. It is true that the argument for a Creator from the creation is by modern science modified only to be strengthened. The doctrine of a great First Cause gives place to the doctrine of an Eternal and Perpetual Cause; the carpenter conception of creation to the doctrine of the divine immanence. The Roman

6 LETTERS TO UNKNOWN FRIENDS

notion of a human Jupiter, renamed Jehovah, made to dwell in some bright particular star, and holding telephonic communication with the spheres by means of invisible wires which sometimes fail to work, dies, and the old Hebrew conception of a divinity which inhabiteth eternity, and yet dwells in the heart of the contrite and the humble, takes its place.

But the argument that an intelligent purpose animates and controls nature to a beneficent end is strengthened, not weakened, by the doctrine of evolution; creation is more, not less, creation, because it is the thought, not the mere handiwork, of God.* It is not possible even to state the doctrine of an atheistic creation without using the language of theism in the statement.

But the heart finds no refuge in an Infinite and an Eternal Energy from which all things proceed. That refuge is found only in the faith that God has entered a human life, taken the helm, ruled heart and hand and tongue, written in terms of human experience the biography of God in his

*The theological student may be referred to Wallace and to Bergson's "Creative Evolution" for scientific demonstration of this truth.

tory, revealed in the teaching of Christ the truth of God, in the life of Christ the character of God, in the passion of Christ the suffering of God.

That God is in nature, filling it with himself, as the spirit fills the body with its presence, so that all nature forces are but expressions of the divine will, and all nature laws but habits of divine action — this is the doctrine of the Fatherhood. That God was in Christ, so that what Jesus Christ was seen to be, in the three short years of his public life, that God is in his eternal administration of the universe — that is the doctrine of the divine Sonship. That God is in human experience, guiding, illuminating, inspiring, making all willing souls sons of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ — this is the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. And this threefold faith is the doctrine of the Trinity, stated in terms of my personal experience.

Thus this Christ is the manifestation of God, not of certain attributes of God or certain phases of his administration. There is no justice to be

8 LETTERS TO UNKNOWN FRIENDS

feared in God that was not manifested in Christ; there is no mercy to attract in Christ that is not eternally in God. He who suffered, he who redeems, he will judge. I am not afraid to trust myself, my friends, or the heathen in the hands of him whose mercy endureth forever. My doctrine of a future judgment is all summed up in one faith: Christ shall judge the world. The spirit of the final Judge will be that of him who said to the woman taken in adultery: "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more"; that of him who also with infinite indignation denounced the smug, religious pretenders of his time, who devoured widows' houses and for a pretense made long prayers, as hypocrites and as a generation of vipers, and yet with infinite pity appealed to them: "How can ye escape the damnation of hell?" The dogma that it is only in this life that man can repent, or mercy can be shown to him if he does repent, I repudiate as unscriptural and inconsistent alike with faith in the Fatherhood of God and in the freedom of man. The mediæval pictures of eternal torment

in hell fire are of pagan, not of Christian, birth. Except in the Book of Revelation and in one parable of Christ, fire in the Scriptures is a symbol of either purification or destruction, never of torment.* I refuse to believe that the accident of death transmutes God's mercy into wrath and makes repentance impossible, and so closes the door of hope upon the soul forever. Endless conscious sin I do not believe in. I could endure the thought of endless suffering, but not of sin growing ever deeper, darker, more awful. It has grown to me unthinkable; I believe it is unscriptural.

On my faith in Christ rests also my faith in the Bible. The Bible is the casket which contains the image of my Master — that is enough; whether it be lead or silver or gold is matter of minor concern. There are modern writers on law that may be as valuable as Moses; there are poems

*In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus Christ uses the common opinion of his time to enforce the truth that God's condemnation falls, not on the pagan because he is a pagan, nor on the unorthodox because he is unorthodox, but on the unloving and unbrotherly because he is unloving and unbrotherly. The lesson of a parable is to be deduced from the conclusion reached, not from the imagery employed. Christ's use of the unjust judge to enforce persistence in prayer does not mean approval or of indifference to the injustice of the judges of his time.

of Browning and Tennyson and our own Whittier that are far more pervaded with the Christlike spirit than some in the Hebrew Psalmody. But there is no life like the life of Christ. The law and the prophets are sacred because they point to and prepare for him; the Gospels are sacred because they tell the story of his incomparable life; the epistles are sacred because they interpret that life as continuous in the experience of his Church. The Bible is unique and incomparable in literature, because it is the history of the revelation of God in human experience, beginning with the declaration that God made man in his own image, bringing out in law, history, drama, poetry, prophecy, that divine image more and more clearly, until it reaches its consummation in the portrait of Him who was the express image of God's Person and the brightness of his glory.

So my faith in miracles rests also on my faith in Christ — he himself a greater miracle by far than any attributed to him. That beneficent power should have flashed from such a Christ, that death should be powerless to hold such a Christ

in the grave, that angels should have announced his coming and proclaimed his resurrection — all this seems to me natural and easy to believe, as easy to believe in these scintillations of divinity from the Person of Christ as to believe in scintillations of genius from a Shakespeare or a Dante.

I do not believe that the laws of nature have ever been violated, for this would be to believe that God who dwells in nature and animates it has violated the laws of his own being. But it is easy for me to believe that unusual phenomena have sometimes afforded unusual evidence of his perpetual presence. Some stories in Scripture, such as the story of Jonah, I think are fiction, never intended by the writer to be taken as history; some, such as the story of the floating axe head and the coin found in a fish's mouth, I regard as folklore, incorporated by an indiscriminating editor in the historical record. Nor do I think it necessary to decide just what measure of accuracy characterizes each separate incident. For my faith in Christ rests, not on the miracles, but on Christ himself. Even as he wrought them he

12 LETTERS TO UNKNOWN FRIENDS

declared them to be but inferior evidences of his divinity. Their subordinate importance is clearer than ever now that they are no longer wonders which we witness, but the histories of wonders witnessed by others. To believe in Christ — that the Father is in him, and he is in the Father — this is Christian faith. The spirit which in the modern Church has sometimes sought to found Christian faith on signs and wonders appears to me to be almost as much one of unbelief as the spirit which outside the Church denies the miraculous altogether. Miracles are witnesses to divinity; revelation is the unveiling of divinity; but Christ is himself divinity; and he who accepts Christ — who loves him, reverences him, obeys him, follows him, lives to be like him — is Christ's disciple, however illogical may seem to me to be his philosophy about natural and revealed religion, about nature and the supernatural.

But certain events narrated in the Bible and ordinarily regarded as miraculous seem to me thoroughly well attested. The geology of the region about the Dead Sea remains a perpetual

monument to attest and interpret the story of the destruction of the Cities of the Plain; which was neither more nor less miraculous than the destruction in our own times of St. Pierre on the island of Martinique. The geography of the Red Sea tends to confirm the story of the Exodus, and enables us to understand exactly how an ebbing tide and a great wind might have combined to make the crossing of the sea practicable; the cloud which protected the fleeing Israelites from pursuing Egyptians was neither more nor less miraculous than the fog which protected Washington's retreat from the pursuit of the British after the Battle of Long Island. In short, the difference between the present time and Bible times is not that the age of miracles has passed. It is that we are more slow to see the presence of the Eternal in the events of life than were the Hebrew sacred writers.

I think there is no better attested fact in ancient history than the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But, as I have often said, I regard it not as an extraordinary event, but as an extra-

14 LETTERS TO UNKNOWN FRIENDS

ordinary evidence of an ordinary event. Every death is a resurrection. Death is the dropping of the body from the spirit. Resurrection is the upspringing of the spirit from the body. That the disciples had some ocular evidence that their Master was still living, that his life was not ended nor even halted, and his promise to be with them in their future ministry was not an idle promise, appears to me to be demonstrated alike by their curiously conflicting and wholly independent testimonies, by the difficulty which they experienced in accepting the fact, by the change which it wrought in their characters, and by the extraordinary moral movement, otherwise wholly inexplicable, which was born of their conviction, and has transformed the life of the world.

I have given here this confession of my faith because I have been so often asked for it. But one may accept this philosophy of life and not be a Christian, and he may be a Christian and not accept this philosophy of life. The oldest creed in Christendom is in Paul's Epistle to Titus: "The grace of God that bringeth salva-

tion hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." To be a disciple of Christ is to learn from Christ how to live; to be a follower of Christ is to live as Christ lived. It is to make his teaching and his life the ideal for our own life. It is to live soberly, making material things always subordinate to spiritual life; righteously, loving our fellow-men as he loved; godly, walking in companionship with the Father, making it our will to do his will; and hopefully, looking forward toward and helping onward that kingdom of God which is righteousness and peace and joy in holiness of spirit. My only reason for writing this confession of my faith here is the hope that it may help some of my Unknown Friends to live this life of temperance, love, faith, and hope.

II

A PERSONAL GOD

YES! I certainly do believe in a personal God; a God who has plans and purposes and affections, a God who cares for his children, a God to whom I can speak and who understands me, a God who speaks to me and whom I can somewhat understand, a God to whose inspiring fellowship I owe all that I am or hope to be; in a word, a God who is "Our Father."

And yet I do not wish to define this faith, even by so simple a word as personal. Because faith transcends definition, and the simplest definition is liable to be misunderstood. I once had a conversation with a young man on this subject which ran something as follows:

Inquirer. Do you believe in a personal God?

Myself. What do you mean by a personal God?

Inquirer. I mean a great big man, sitting up in the centre of the universe, ruling things.

Myself. No! I do not believe in that kind of a personal God.

Inquirer. Oh! then you are a pantheist.

We sometimes seem to me to be like a shipload of passengers who find themselves on a great steamer in the middle of the ocean, and who do not know where they came from, or what port they are bound to, or what is the object of the voyage, or who is the commander in charge. It seems very clear to me that life is not a mere game of chance, that nature is not chaos nor society anarchy, that there is a meaning to life and a purpose in it, that I am living in a world of law and not of fortuitous happenings, and that this world of law is under the ultimate control of a Lawgiver. And I find, on inquiry of my fellow-passengers, that practically all or nearly all the men and women for whose intellectual and moral character I have respect are of this opinion.

18 LETTERS TO UNKNOWN FRIENDS

I ask the students of nature, and Herbert Spencer, whose philosophy of life is all founded on an unemotional and unimaginative study of nature, replies: "There remains the one absolute certainty that man is ever in the presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy from which all things proceed."

I ask the students of human life, and Hegel, speaking for Philosophy, replies: "God governs the world; the actual working of his government — the carrying out of his plan — is the History of the World."

I ask the men who are probing for the secret of all life's phenomena, and Ernst Haeckel, speaking for Biology, replies: "The more developed man of the present day is capable of, and justified in, conceiving that infinitely nobler and sublimer idea of God which alone is compatible with the monistic conception of the universe, and which recognizes God's spirit and power in all phenomena without exception."

I ask the moral reformers, the men who are trying to improve the conditions of their fellow-

passengers in this voyage of life, and Mazzini replies: "God exists. We ought not, do not want to prove it; to attempt that would seem blasphemy; to deny it, madness." And again: "Call it God, or what you like, there is life which we have not created, but which is given."

I ask the literary critics who study the lives of men in the record of their thoughts and feelings, and Matthew Arnold replies: "There is a Power not ourselves which makes for righteousness."

I ask the poets and Alfred Tennyson replies:

"The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills, and the plains —
Are not these, O Soul, the Vision of Him who reigns?
Is not the Vision He? though He be not that which He seems."

I agree with Spencer that the Eternal Energy is ever present in all our lives; with Hegel that He governs the world; with Haeckel that His spirit and power are in all phenomena; with Mazzini that His life is given to the world; with Matthew Arnold that it is a life which makes for righteousness; and with Alfred Tennyson that we

may trust the Vision, though He be infinitely more and better than any Vision we have of him.

These men the Church calls agnostics. They are agnostics, not because they disbelieve in God, but because they disbelieve in the ecclesiastical definitions of God.

In the story of Israel it is said that when God met Moses at the burning bush, and gave him his commission to become the emancipator of Israel, Moses wanted a definition of the One who commissioned him. "When I come unto the children of Israel," he said, "and say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?" But God refused to give a definition. The Voice replied simply, "I AM THAT I AM. Say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."

I have no objection to the definitions which theology has afforded of God. But I accept none of them. Just because they are definitions they are too definite. No interpretation of God is true that is not aglow with imagination and

warm with feeling. God is not a hypothesis to be explained, but an experience to be declared. I go, therefore, to the poets, not to the theologians, to speak for me. The Westminster definition of God as "a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible," etc., etc., does not appeal to me. The hymn of Walter C. Smith does appeal to me. For it is a transcript of one phase, but only one phase, of my experience of the divine fellowship:

"Unresting, unshaking, and silent as light,
Nor wanting, nor wasting, Thou rulest in might;
Thy justice like mountains high soaring above
Thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness and love.
To all life Thou givest — to both great and small;
In all life Thou livest, the true life of all;
We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,
And wither and perish: but naught changeth Thee.
To-day and to-morrow with Thee still are now;
Nor trouble, nor sorrow, nor care, Lord, hast Thou;
Nor passion doth fever, nor age can decay:
The same God forever that was yesterday."

I believe not only that God exists, but that he is the inspirer of a life which we do not create,

22 LETTERS TO UNKNOWN FRIENDS

but which is given. I believe that our invisible Commander, the unknown I AM, is ever sending to his children a message from himself, by the voices of the poets and prophets, by the vision of the artists and the musicians, by the heroic deeds of noble men and the pure lives of devout women, by the great achievements of the great leaders, by the humble lives of self-denying fathers and mothers, by the innocence of the little children, and most of all by the Voice that speaks to us and the Vision that is given to us in the hours of our silent communion with him.

This is my answer to your question, "Do you believe in a personal God?" Does it seem to you vague? It is vague. All spiritual experience is vague. For all spiritual experience transcends defining.

III

NATURE AND THE GOSPEL

I THANK you for calling my attention to the article of John Burroughs in the *Century Magazine* on the "Gospel of Nature." In the main I heartily agree with it, and wish that I had learned in my youth to observe and to enjoy nature as John Burroughs does.

Nature may be regarded as a vast machine which we are to study in order that we may use it for the enhancement of our comfort. So Mr. Edison regards it.

Or as a laboratory, in which we may learn truths of life and acquire self-development. So Mr. Darwin regarded it.

Or as a museum filled with curiosities and beauties, in which we may gain æsthetic enjoyment and that life to which beauty ministers.

So John Burroughs regards it. But nature has no gospel.

Reverence is a feeling of respect and admiration which an inferior feels toward a superior. Nature is not superior to man; it is inferior to man. Nature is material, man is spiritual; nature is mechanical, man is intellectual; nature is blindly subject to invisible forces, man is self-governing; nature has no moral qualities and is not morally accountable, man is a free moral agent, capable of right and wrong, and subject to reward and penalty, to approval and to condemnation. We condemn Nero who rekindled the conflagration in Rome, but not Vesuvius which buried Herculaneum in lava; we applaud the Dutch for bringing in the sea to drive out the Spaniards, but not the sea for coming in answer to their invitation.

We may think of nature as a machine which the Great Machinist has wound up and set a-going. So Paley thought of it; but we reverence the Machinist, not the machine.

Or we may think of nature as a body animated

by the Great Spirit present in all its varied activities. So Bergson thinks of it; but we reverence the Spirit, not the body which it inhabits.

Whichever way we look at nature, we do not reverence her.

John Stuart Mill has graphically described the unmoral character of nature:

Nature impales men, breaks them as if on the wheel, casts them to be devoured by wild beasts, burns them to death, crushes them with stones like the first Christian martyr, starves them with hunger, freezes them with cold, poisons them by the quick or slow venom of her exhalations, and has hundreds of other hideous deaths in reserve, such as the ingenious cruelty of a Nabis or a Domitian never surpassed.

Whether John Burroughs or Thompson Seton correctly interprets the animals, it is certainly true that nature is neither moral nor immoral; it is unmoral. There is no gospel in nature.

Nature is not a manifestation of God. "The firmament showeth his handiwork"; but God is more than his handiwork. Man is the manifestation of God. We do not look through nature to nature's God, but through humanity to humanity's God. In man are the Father's lineaments.

We can see them even in sinful, ruined man, as we can see the beauty of Greek art in the ruined temple and the broken statue.

To man, thinking that nature is God, and worshipping an unmoral God, and trying to win his favours by gifts and sacrifices, comes the Gospel. And this is its message:

Nature is not God; nature is not the image of God; man is the image of God. Would you know God? Look into your own heart; God dwells within you. Your sense of justice administering law, your spirit of compassion administering mercy, your loving self-sacrifice inspiring you fathers and mothers to give your lives for your children — these are the interpreters of God. God is spirit; you are spirit; you are God's offspring; you and he are kin.

And that you may know him better, he has come into your world and lived a human life with you; and he still comes into your world and lives with you. In humanity you are to look for his unveiling; something of him in every just and generous spirit; all of him that you can compre-

hend in the life and character of his Son, the man Christ Jesus.

Jesus Christ was poor; reverence is not for riches. Jesus Christ had only a peasant's education; reverence is not for scholarship. Jesus Christ was without political authority; reverence is not for power. Jesus Christ taught as never man taught and loved as never man loved; reverence is for truth and love. This is the Gospel. It is not in nature; it is in human nature.

Edison will not find a gospel in the machine, nor Darwin in the book, nor John Burroughs in the museum. But we may all find it in our fellow-men: in the justice of the statesman, in the ministry of the doctor, in the patience of the teacher, in the compassion of the philanthropist, in the self-sacrifice of the father and mother; and most of all in the life and character of him "who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven."

You may not believe this Gospel; but it is at least well that you understand it. I do not wonder that men do not believe it. That the

28 **LETTERS TO UNKNOWN FRIENDS**

Eternal, the Lord and Giver of life, the Creator and Ruler of the universe, should have come into one human life, filling it full of himself, that he may come into all our lives filling us all with himself, sometimes seems to me news too good to be true, too stupendous to be believed. But this is the Gospel. It is belief in this Gospel which makes me an optimist, and I find it easier to believe that man has discovered this God than to believe that man has invented him.

IV

ARE THERE THREE GODS?

No; I do not believe that there are three Gods. There is only one God. And they who imagine, as some seem to do, that the doctrine that there are three persons in one God means, or is thought to mean, that there are three distinct divine individualities or personalities, totally misunderstand the doctrine of the Trinity. I do not propose to try to tell you in this letter what is the doctrine of the Trinity. I propose only to try to tell you how I think of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

A friend of mine who knows much more about church theology than I do tells me that I am not an Orthodox Trinitarian, but a Modalistic Monarchian. I am quite indifferent to the labels which are given to me, and I make no attempt to label myself.

There are three ways, and only three, in which any person can manifest himself to other persons: by his works, by the story of his life, and by his personal companionship. I ask a musical acquaintance of mine, "Do you know Elgar?" "Oh, yes," he says; "very well. I rank him as the first of living English composers." "Tell me about him," I say. "Is he a Protestant or a Roman Catholic?" "Oh, I know nothing about that," he answers; "I know him only as a musician." "Have you ever seen him?" "Never." He knows Sir Edward Elgar by his musical compositions.

Stirred by my inquiry, he goes to a musical library, takes down from the shelves a cyclopædia or a book of biography, and learns about the life of Sir Edward Elgar — that he is a Roman Catholic; that he began his career as an organist in a Roman Catholic church; that he later became conductor of an instrumental society; that his later work has been that of a composer. Now he has a new acquaintance with Elgar, an acquaintance which throws light also on Elgar's music.

Later he goes abroad. He gets a letter of introduction, presents it, is received at Elgar's house as his guest. The two are congenial, and he becomes Elgar's intimate friend. Now he has obtained a third and still better acquaintance.

But neither of these methods of acquaintance alone is sufficient. If the maid in Elgar's house knows nothing and cares nothing for music, she does not know Elgar. If the writer of Elgar's biography has never seen him, he does not know Elgar. If the performer of his works has neither read the story of his life nor made his acquaintance, he does not know Elgar. To a real acquaintance with Elgar a knowledge of his music, acquaintance with his life, and personal companionship are essential.

I believe there is one God, the Father of all the living; that he is not an unknown and an unknowable God; that he has taken these three methods to make us, his children, acquainted with him.

We can see the evidence of his wisdom and his power in the works of nature. We can know with Herbert Spencer that we are ever in the presence

of the Infinite and the Eternal Energy from which all things proceed. We can trace his influence in the progress of history. We can see that history is an evolution from an unknown starting point to an unknown consummation, and that in this progress there is a steady development toward the higher intellectual and moral life of humanity; that, in Matthew Arnold's phrase, "there is a power not ourselves that makes for righteousness." The Father makes himself known to us through his works.

He also makes himself known to us through the Incarnation; that is, through his dwelling in a human life. When I say that I believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ, I mean what John meant when he said, "The Word became flesh"; that is, God, who was always a speaking God, manifesting himself to men through his works, entered into the man Christ Jesus, and in him manifests what Henry van Dyke has well called "the human life of God." I mean what Paul meant when he said, "God was manifest in the flesh"; that is, Jesus Christ was the supremest manifestation of God

possible in a single human life. I mean that he showed forth in that life the Spirit Eternal, so that we may know that what Jesus Christ was in his human relationships in that brief life the Father is in his relationship to all his children in all time.

He also makes himself known most intimately by the companionship of his Spirit with our spirits.

Jesus Christ declares of himself, "I am the door." We do not simply look at the door; we push it open and go in. Jesus Christ is the one through whom we come into fellowship with the Father, into a companionship with God analogous to that which Jesus had with God. He becomes to us the Great Companion. He is our Friend, to whom we can go with our joys and sorrows, our temptations and our sins, our struggles, our victories, and our defeats, sure of his friendship and his aid, whatever our past experience or our present need may be.

I do not say that this is all that the Trinity means. I do not think it is an adequate definition of the Trinity as it is interpreted by the theological

34 LETTERS TO UNKNOWN FRIENDS

books, but it is what the Trinity means to me. It is a Trinity in experience. It is acquaintance with God through his works, through his human life, and through his personal companionship. It is the faith that he is in the budding trees and the blossoming flowers this June morning as truly as he was in that day when he said, "Let the earth put forth grass, herbs yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit after their kind;" the faith that he is in American history, guiding it to its predetermined end, as truly as he ever was in the history of Israel; the faith that he was and is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself by making himself known to the world and imparting his life to the world; the faith that he dwells with and in his children, "never so far as even to be near"; the faith that we may offer Paul's prayer with the assured hope of an answer, "That ye may be filled with all the fulness of God"; the faith that Christ's prayer for his followers will be fulfilled and is being fulfilled: "That they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be in us."

V

THE GAME OF LIFE

THE other day one of our neighbours' children came in to spend the afternoon. He was beginning to learn the game of chess and asked me if I played. Yes; would he like to have a game? Very much. How did he want me to play? Should I play as well as I could and beat him, if possible, or should I play an easy game, and let him beat me? He reflected a moment and then replied: "Please play as well as ever you can. I want to learn the game."

After he had gone I recalled a notable passage in one of Mr. Huxley's essays which, in the light of my afternoon's experience, seemed to me to throw a little light upon your question. The passage reads as follows:

36 LETTERS TO UNKNOWN FRIENDS

Yet it is a very plain and elementary truth, that the life, the fortune, and the happiness of every one of us, and, more or less, of those who are connected with us, do depend upon our knowing something of the rules of a game infinitely more difficult and complicated than chess. It is a game which has been played for untold ages, every man and woman of us being one of the two players in a game of his or her own. The chess-board is the world, the pieces are the phenomena of the universe, the rules of the game are what we call the laws of nature. The player on the other side is hidden from us. We know that his play is always fair, just, and patient. But also we know, to our cost, that he never overlooks a mistake, or makes the smallest allowance for ignorance. To the man who plays well the highest stakes are paid, with that sort of overflowing generosity with which the strong shows delight in strength. And one who plays ill is checkmated — without haste, but without remorse

Perhaps my youthful friend's reply to my question may throw some light on yours: Why, if God is good, is life so hard? Why, to use Mr. Huxley's figure, does the unknown Player never overlook a mistake or make the smallest allowance for ignorance?

Why? Perhaps because he wants us to learn the game. Perhaps his object in our lives is to teach us how to live.

I have no solution of the problem of evil; the

why and wherefore of it. A much more important question seems to me to be this: How shall I meet the evil that comes into my world and get good out of it for myself and for others?

Doctor Cadman, of Brooklyn, has said, "I do not wish to live in a fool-proof universe." I agree with Doctor Cadman. I would much rather live in a universe in which out of my blunders I can learn wisdom, and out of my sins I can acquire virtue. I do not see how I can do this if there is no hardness in my life. Therefore I welcome the hardness. My prayer to my Father is: Be just and patient with me, but do not overlook my mistakes or my sins or even my ignorances. I want to learn the game. Help me to learn it by putting on me the consequences of my own misdoing. This is the prayer of the Psalmist: "See if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." The way everlasting is not all flowers.

Peter thus describes the process of character-building:

Add to your faith virtue, that is valour.
And to valour knowledge.
And to knowledge self-control.
And to self-control patience.
And to patience godliness.
And to godliness brotherly kindness.
And to brotherly kindness love.

How to do this is the problem of life. We can not add valour without dangers to be confronted; nor knowledge without problems to be solved; nor self-control without passions to be controlled; nor patience without burdens to be borne; nor godliness without a struggle to see him who is invisible; nor brotherly kindness without self-denying service; nor the deepest, truest love without loving where there is no payment for our love, even in gratitude.

If we are eager to acquire these qualities, we shall be willing to pay the price in discipline. We shall welcome danger if it will develop valour; problems if they will develop knowledge; passions if they will develop self-control; burdens if they will develop patience; the struggles of faith if they will develop godliness; self-denying service if it

will develop brotherly kindness; and even ingratitude and enmity if they will make our love, like the love of the Father, spontaneous and irrepressible.

I repeat, I am not attempting to explain life. Much of it is enigmatical to me. The dangers sometimes seem too great for the endangered to meet; the problems too great for the reason to wrestle with; the burdens too great for the shoulders on which they are laid. As to my companions in life's voyage, I have the faith that I see only a fragment of their lives and of my own, and, as I know not what opportunities of development life may have for them in the future, I take refuge from my perplexity in a frank acknowledgment to myself of my ignorance. I have not to solve the problem and am content to leave it unsolved. But for myself, I can resolve so to meet the dangers which confront me as to increase my courage; so to wrestle with my problems as to increase my intellectual powers; so to bear the burdens which are laid upon me as to develop my patience; so to give my service to my fellow-men as to grow in

40 LETTERS TO UNKNOWN FRIENDS

brotherly kindness; so to meet wrongdoing with compassion as to make my love free and spontaneous; in short, so to live that by my life I may do something to give help to the neighbour at my side and to borrow help from him, that we may both live bravely, wisely, patiently, lovingly.

You and I do not need to understand the whole mystery of life in order so to play our game with the hidden Player on the other side that we may learn to play our part well here and prepare ourselves to play our part well hereafter, whatever it may be. So I can join with Adelaide Procter:

I thank Thee more that all my joy
Is touched with pain;
That shadows fall on brightest hours,
That thorns remain;
So that earth's bliss may be my guide,
And not my chain.

VI

CAN I LOVE GOD ?

YOU ask, How can I love God? How can I love a Person whom I have not seen and cannot see? I answer by another question: How can you love a person whom you can see and have seen?

What is it that you love in your friend? His eyes, mouth, nose, chin, figure? It is sometimes said of a woman that she has a lovely figure, or of a man that he has a lovely pair of whiskers, or of a child that she has lovely eyes. But it is not the figure, the whiskers, the eyes, you love. It is the character within, which you never have seen and never can see. You love the child for his lovable disposition; and you cannot *see* disposition. You love your friend for his courage, his patience, his loyalty, his truth; and courage, patience, loyalty,

and truth are invisible. A very simple illustration should suffice to make this clear. Your friend dies. You go into the room where the form lies in the casket, and, as you gaze upon her face, you say, How natural she looks! And yet your heart is full of sorrow and your eyes are filled with tears. Why? All that you can *see* is there. But what you loved is not there; the invisible spirit is fled forever. Love sorrows because the loved one is gone. And yet — what you *see* is not gone.

It is this fact, that a person is to us, not what we see but what we do not see, that causes such contradictory judgments to be formed and expressed concerning the same person. I received the other day by the same mail two letters, one of which characterized Mr. Roosevelt as a bull in a china shop; the other, as a great leader who had awakened the conscience of the nation and was leading it through the jungle of passion and prejudice up greater heights. What was the reason for these different opinions concerning the same man? If they had seen and heard him from the same platform, all that was visible and audible would

have been the same. They had formed two entirely different conceptions or images of the same personality. One conceived a reckless bull, the other a courageous leader. The invisible personality appeared very different to the two correspondents. To me Mr. Roosevelt is the great leader, and if the first correspondent had known the "real Roosevelt" as well as I do, he also would have seen in him the great leader.

There are two Johns who have given to the world two very different conceptions of God — the Apostle John and John Stuart Mill. The Apostle John says, "God is love." John Stuart Mill says that Natural Theology indicates that he is "a Being . . . who desires, and pays grave regard to, the happiness of his creatures, but who seems to have other motives of action which he cares more for." These two statements are not as inconsistent as at first sight they seem. For a God of love would care more for the *character* of his creatures than for their *happiness*. But they indicate the widely differing conceptions of God which have prevailed in the world. There

44 LETTERS TO UNKNOWN FRIENDS

is a sense in which it is true that man makes God in his own image. From the manifestations of an unknown Personality in life and nature, including our own experience, we form our conception of God; from the manifestations of our friend's unseen personality in his appearance, demeanour, and speech, we form our conception of our friend. The one is no more invisible than the other.

It is easier for some than for others to realize the presence of an invisible personality without any visible manifestation of that presence. It is easier to do so at some times than at others. It is easier for those who believe, as I do, that he is manifested in all the higher life of the men and women whom I love and know, and most of all in the incomparable life of Jesus of Nazareth, than it is for those who have no such faith. When I say that I love God, what I mean is that I love the Personal Spirit who is manifested in Christ's life and in the life of all who are like Christ. What I mean when I say that I love Christ is that I see and love in him that divine Spirit. When I am asked if it is right to pray to Christ, the

question is meaningless to me, for my faith is that of John. To me Jesus Christ is "that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life." I can no more distinguish between Christ and the invisible Spirit who manifested himself through Christ than I can distinguish between my friend in the body at my side and his spirit which manifests itself through his voice and conduct.

But there are times when all these physical manifestations disappear, when it seems to me that their existence would be a barrier, not an aid, when the Presence is more present because there is no voice to speak and no form to see, when, to use Faber's phrase, he is "not so far as even to be near." But, alike when this is true and when it is not, alike in love for God, for Christ, and for friend, it seems to me that true love is always for an unseen personality.

VII

RESTING IN GOD

I AM saved by faith. By that I do not mean that I believe certain theological propositions, and therefore will go to heaven when I die; and that you do not believe these propositions, and therefore will not go to heaven when you die. I mean that the perplexities, the discouragements, the sense of the uselessness of it all, which oppresses you, I do not share. The awful sense, What is it all about? Is it all worth while? under the shadow of which so much of your life is spent, I know only by sympathetic imagination. I am fighting in a cause which I at least partly comprehend, for a result which I feel sure we shall achieve, and under a Commander whom I revere and love.

This difference between your view of life and mine I can best interpret by an illustration.

We are soldiers in the same camp.

We have the same duties, and suffer the same inconveniences. The same drum call summons us to get up in the morning; we sit down to the same camp fare for breakfast. We engage in the same battle; see the same tragedies of pain and passion; visit in the same hospital. But to you it is all a muddle. You do not know what it is all about. In the Civil War a Tennessee mountaineer, taken prisoner, asked his captor, "What are you uns coming down here to fight we uns for?" Your attitude of life seems to me somewhat like his. Life is chaos; its struggle, its problems, its pains, its sorrows and sins, all unnecessary. And who is our commander and what is to be the end of it all you have little idea. You are not even sure that there is to be any end; that there is any commander; that we are in camp for any purpose; that the enigma has any solution. Meantime, however, you are doing what you can to make life easier for others — and better, as

well as easier; what you can to alleviate distress and inspire patience and courage in others. You are loyal to truth and duty, as you understand them; and you propose to yourself to be loyal, whatever is the issue, or whether or not there ever is an issue.

I am no better in these respects than you are. Perhaps I am not your equal; not so patient, so heroic, so faithful. But I believe that we are in camp for a purpose. I believe that we have a Commander-in-Chief who is really commanding in this campaign. I believe that he understands what it all means and has assigned me my place and task. I do not understand, I do not particularly care to understand, his great plans. I am quite sure that I could not understand them if I tried. All I want is to know enough to do well the duty he has assigned me. I believe that he not only understands but that he will succeed; that is, that *we* shall succeed; that the issue of the long campaign will be a kingdom of God which is the victory of righteousness, and its fruits peace and universal welfare.

This is not all.

It is not only the world that is an enigma to me; I am an enigma to myself. The seventh chapter of Romans is real to me: "For what I do, I do without knowing what I am doing. What I desire to do is not what I do, but what I am averse to doing."* The General Confession appeals to me: "We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done; and there is no health in us." I ought not to have to say this every Sunday morning; but when Sunday morning comes and I look back, something of this I see in the week that is past. This is not all that I see; but I do see this. I need a Physician to heal me; a Commander to guide me; a Father to direct and discipline me. For I am but a child, in spite of my years.

I believe that I have found such a Friend; and I have put myself in his hands. I believe that he understands me a great deal better than I understand myself, and that he will be able to make

*Romans, vii. 15: Weymouth's Translation.

something worth while out of me. I believe that he can bring good out of my evil, and prevent my self-destruction by his wisdom and his love. And by this faith I am saved from useless repinings over the past, hindering fears for the future, and tormenting self-examinations in the present.

This faith of mine you will perhaps call imagination. Very well. I am not sure that trust in one's spiritual imagination might not serve as a good synonym for faith. This faith is not founded on reason. It is founded on experience. But I have tested it by my reason, and it appears to me to be a reasonable faith. And I trust in it, and live by it. And by it I am saved from problems too intricate for me to solve and burdens too heavy for me to carry.

VIII

TEMPTATION — STRUGGLE — VICTORY

IT WAS early evening. A young mother was sitting before an open fire in the parlour. Upstairs was the little girl whom she had just tucked in bed. The mother's alert ear heard a little stirring in the room overhead; then a patter of little feet upon the stairs and along the hall; and then the mother, through the portière which separated the parlour from the dining-room, saw this childish Eve climb on a chair, take a big, rosy apple from the fruit dish in the centre of the table, and patter back through the hall and slowly climb the stairs again.

It would have been so easy to stop the theft before it was completed, or detect the culprit with her booty in her hand. But this is a wise mother. She does not care to stop the uncompleted theft

or to detect the culprit and compel her to a shame-faced but reluctant confession. She wishes, not to stop the child from committing a sin, but to prevent her from becoming a sinner. She wishes, not to control her daughter, but to create in her daughter a power of self-control. She wishes any confession to be not compelled but voluntary, not reluctant but spontaneous. She waits and thinks. She is accustomed to think first and act afterward. Wise mother!

And as she waits, still all alert, she hears a stirring again in the room overhead, and again the patter of little feet upon the stair and along the hall. What? Is the child going to take another apple? No! she climbs into the chair, puts the purloined apple back into the fruit dish, and through the curtained doorway the gladdened mother hears the childish voice say softly, with what was half a sigh and half a chuckle, "That's one on you, Satan." And then the feet patter along the hall and climb the stairway, and all is still. And the mother is thankful in her heart that she did not follow her first impulse and interfere.

This true story, as it has been told to me, suggests the answer to certain questions which some of my Unknown Friends have lately put to me. For it contains four of the elements of life's continuous drama — temptation, sin, repentance, victory. The fifth element is not there — redemption. For the mother did not save the child; the child saved herself.

Temptation is not sin. The childish desire for the apple was a perfectly innocent desire. Temptation involves no sin. Gluttony is sin, but appetite is not. Stealing is sin, but the desire to acquire property is not. The child desired the apple — that was quite right. She also desired to be an honest little girl and to be worthy of her mother's approbation. That was of course quite right. She sinned when the desire for the apple mastered the desire to be an honest little girl and to be worthy of her mother's approbation.

Taking the apple was not the sin; it was a consequence of the sin. The sin began when she began to indulge in the wish to get the apple which was not hers, and which she knew her mother

would disapprove her taking. It was consummated when she resolved to disobey her conscience and disregard her mother's wish and take the apple. In this resolve, this act of the will, the sin was committed. If when she got downstairs she had found that the maid had locked the apples up in the closet and there was no apple there, still she would have sinned. If she had resolved to wait until her mother went out to make an evening call and then go down without fear of detection, and instead had fallen asleep and had wakened in the morning disappointed that she had not been able to complete her purpose, still she would have sinned. A sin is completed when the resolve to complete it is made. "Sin is lawlessness." It is the conscious disregard of a higher law for the gratification of a desire which in itself may be entirely innocent. It is entirely innocent for the little child to wish the apple. It is not innocent for her to desire the apple more than she wished to obey the voice of her conscience telling her not to take it.

Being sorry for having done wrong is not repent-

ance, though repentance involves being sorry for the wrong done. If the little girl had taken the apple and carried it upstairs, and then had begun to be afraid that the apple would be missed and she herself detected, or, without that fear, had begun to feel ashamed of herself and had even wished that she had not taken the apple, that would not have been repentance. She repented when she resolved to take the apple back and put it in its place in the fruit basket. Repentance is not feeling, though it involves feeling; it is not action, though it generally involves action. Repentance is the resolve not to repeat the wrong done, and to do all that one can do to repair its effects. No repentance is genuine which does not involve an earnest desire, and, when repair is possible, a serious endeavour, to undo the wrong committed. Peter's repentance was not completed when he went out and wept bitterly. It never would have been completed had he not accepted from his Master his recommission and gone out to acknowledge his Lord and confess his faith in him, always at the peril and eventually at

the cost of his life. Judas Iscariot was sorry that he had betrayed his Master — so sorry that he committed suicide. But Judas Iscariot did not repent.

When undoing the wrong which we have done involves confession, repentance involves confession. When undoing the wrong we have done does not involve confession, repentance does not involve confession. The little girl completed her repentance when she put the apple back. She might never tell her mother of her temptation, her sin, her repentance, her victory; she might even think that to do so would seem more like boasting than confessing.

The child was a better child for her experience, and better equipped for life because she had passed through it. The mother might well feel a new pride in her little girl because her little girl had won such a victory; and the child herself might well experience a feeling of exultation in that she had won so hard a battle.

This incident may not, probably will not, suffice to answer the questions of several of my Unknown

Friends respecting the nature of temptation, sin, and repentance. But it may suggest to them trains of thought which will lead them to some light on their questions.

And some light also on another question which in different forms several of them ask: Why does God allow this terrible drama of sin to go on unchecked when he might so easily stop it? Perhaps for the same reason that the mother allowed her child to steal when she might easily have stopped the theft. The mother was a wise mother; therefore she did not interfere. Perhaps it is because God is a wise God that he does not interfere. Perhaps he is more anxious to make virtuous men than to prevent sinful acts. Perhaps he sees that the only way to make men virtuous is to let them fight against temptation, and not interfere.

Virtue is the choice of the right when we can choose the wrong. Virtue is not possible in a world in which sin is not also possible; because virtue is choosing to do the right when one is free to choose to do wrong. There is in every State

in the Union a community of considerable size, the members of which work, but are not industrious; never drink, but are not temperate; do not steal, but are not honest; and attend divine service, but are not religious. It is the State's Prison. To be industrious one must be free to be idle; to be temperate one must choose not to be a drunkard; to be honest one must have a chance to cheat; and to be devout one must be at liberty not to worship.

The mother was a wise mother, a very wise mother, not to interfere, but to wait and see whether the child could win the victory over herself by herself. What she could have done and what she should have done if the child had failed raises another question. What we can do and what we should do to help one another in the battle of life, and what the Father can do and what the Father does do, are questions which I will leave to be considered in some future letter.

IX

PRAYER

WE do not pray because we believe in God — we believe in God because we pray.

A mother has her Quiet Hour, when she is alone—with herself—and therefore with an invisible companion. Perhaps she frames in her imagination some picture of the one with whom she is in companionship; it may be a Divine Person, awful — dear, yet awful; it may be Jesus of Nazareth, imagined as he was upon earth, talking with his friends at the Supper Table; it may be the Virgin Mary, as she has been seen in pictorial representations of ideal womanhood; it may be some imagined saint, or some recently departed friend; it may be that there is no picture, no frame or sculptured image, even in her thought, only an impersonal personality, only an inde-

finable, ineffable influence. But the companion is to her real; and thereby she derives an inspiration — of strength to do, patience to endure, wisdom to see, love to conquer — which not her father, her pastor, her husband, her dearest and nearest earthly companion, can give her. When she reads the saying, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace," she knows what it means. She is accustomed to go into the garden and gather these fruits.

She does not pray because she believes in God. She believes in God because she prays. He is not to her a hypothesis to account for the creation. He is her most intimate Companion; the only one in whose presence she can lay aside all her reserve and open her inmost thought and feeling.

She wishes her child to grow into this experience. She wishes to teach him to pray. She wishes him to have the very best in life which she possesses; and this Quiet Hour is to her the very best of life. So every night when the plays and tasks and human fellowships have come to an end for the day, she kneels by her child's bed, and together

they pray. The child repeats the prayer, "Now I lay me down to sleep"; or, "Jesus, tender Shepherd, hear me"; or "Our Father"; and with it the wishes of his love for others, "God bless papa, God bless mamma, God bless little sister." There is a moment of pure unselfishness; a moment, too, of undefinable peace. The mother feels an invisible companionship, which she makes no attempt to explain. The child catches the feeling from the mother and shares it with her without understanding it. If baby sister is sick, and the prayer is, "God make baby sister well," the burden of childish anxiety is lifted off the child and is lightened for the mother. The mother leads the child up the invisible ladder on which in prayer we ascend out of our active life, as she leads her child up the stairs, which he could not climb without her help. He wishes to do what mother does, to feel what mother feels; to be what mother is. And so unconsciously he learns to share his mother's Quiet Hour. He prays. The answer comes to him, as it comes to her, in a mysteriously quick-

62 LETTERS TO UNKNOWN FRIENDS

ened life. And he believes in the life because he possesses it; in prayer, without a philosophy of prayer; in God, without a definition of God. His faith in God, like hers, is not an opinion; it is an experience.

X

THE SECOND COMING

I wish Doctor Abbott would give in the *Outlook* his ideas on the Second Coming of Christ. It is a subject of much interest to all interested in religious subjects, and I can find little on it except opinions of Moody, Spurgeon, Müller, etc., whose ideas do not appeal to my reason.

To THIS problem it is not possible to give a definite answer, for the simple reason that it is not possible for us to know definitely what the future contains for us. It is not possible, because our knowledge is limited by our experience, and the future has always transcended the experience of the past.

Could Washington and his associates have conceived of the American Republic stretching from ocean to ocean? Could they have conceived of the tragedy of the Civil War, or the flood-tide of foreign immigration, or the size and power of

industrial organizations of both employers and employed, and the problems which these changes in the Republic would involve? The common language of our day would have been unmeaning to them — trades unions, trusts, combines, Socialism. Even such words as railways and telegraphs, automobiles, and aeroplanes, would have been as unintelligible as Egyptian hieroglyphics.

Could the Puritans under Cromwell have comprehended the meaning of that great democratic movement which they did so much to develop, if not to create? Could they have comprehended the work of Napoleon I, the destroyer of Bourbonism, or the rise and development of representative assemblies, or the present state of religious liberty, which, if they could have conceived it, would have seemed to them a victory of irreligion?

Could the Apostles in the first century have forecast Christianity in the twentieth century, or the Christian development which intervened, with the conflicts, the defeats, the victories, the

corruptions, the idolatries, the persecutions, the wars, the cruelties, the heroisms, which accompanied that development? Could they have conceived of Christians fighting and burning one another in the name of their common Master? The very names familiar to us would have been unmeaning to them — atonement and Trinity, congregationalism and episcopacy, nuns and monks, cathedrals and cloisters and convents. Even such fundamental words as Bible and Church would have suggested to their minds a very different conception from that which they suggest to us.

For these reasons, I have no faith in the attempt of men of our time to interpret the enigmas of the Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelation, or in their endeavour to construct from the curious and unintelligible symbols of those books the panorama of the future, and tell us when and how Jesus Christ will appear, and what will be the accompaniments of his coming. I do not believe that the writers of these symbolical books understood themselves what was to happen

in the future, or expected that their readers would regard the Apocalypse as prewritten history. They understood the future as little as Washington understood the greatness of the future American Republic when he wrote: "An extension of Federal powers would make us one of the most happy, wealthy, respectable, and prosperous nations that ever inhabited the terrestrial globe"; or as Jefferson understood the tragedy of the Civil War when he wrote: "I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just." So far as the prophets were in their writings dealing with the future, they wrote messages to inspire hope and warn of peril, and as messages of hope and warning their words are to be interpreted. To define them is to destroy them.

But that is no reason for disregarding them.

The Old Testament prophets foretold a time when wars would cease, the weapons of war would be transformed into tools of industry, wealth would be equitably divided and poverty abolished, and every one would sit under his own

vine and fig tree; when education would be universal, justice would be enforced by conscience, and law would go out of Zion and need no other enforcement than respect for the Great Lawgiver. But when and how this was to be brought about they did not know. Sometimes they seemed to think that the nation would be the Great Deliverer, sometimes some individual, sometimes that he would be a prince, sometimes a martyr. And when the Messiah came, the most devout students of Old Testament prophecies could understand neither him, nor his method, nor his mission.

The Apostles, inheriting the spirit of hope from the Old Testament prophets, bade their followers also look forward to a better time to come; a new heaven and a new earth in which would dwell righteousness, a kingdom on the earth that would be the dwelling-place of righteousness, peace, and universal welfare founded on the spirit of holiness. It cannot be doubted that the Apostles at first thought that Jesus Christ would descend from heaven in their own generation and initiate this

kingdom. It is not so clear that there was in the Master's teaching, rightly understood, any warrant for this opinion. But both the Master and his Apostles sought to turn the face of the Church toward the future. "The grace of God," wrote the Apostle, "hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present age, looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

The Church has taught, with more or less clearness and fidelity, that Christians should live sober, righteous, and godly lives; but it has neglected its duty of teaching them that they should look forward to a better and clearer revelation of God than they now possess. Faith has been the belief that Jesus Christ *was* the Messiah, and lived, taught, and suffered for the human race. It has not been that Jesus Christ *is* the Messiah, an unseen Personality living, teaching, suffering with and for the human race to-day; still less that his mission will not be over until

humanity is prepared for a clearer revelation of who and what God is — a revelation yet to come. The Church has been looking back, not forward. Religion has been a memory, not a hope. Says Ralph Waldo Emerson:

A new harvest, new men, new fields of thought, new powers call you, and an eye fastened on the past unsuns nature, bereaves me of hope, and ruins me with a squalid indigence which nothing but death can adequately symbolize.

And again, speaking of the crucifixion:

This great Defeat is hitherto the highest fact we have. But he that shall come shall do better. The mind requires a far higher exhibition of character, one which shall make itself good to the senses as well as to the soul; a success to the senses as well as to the soul. This was a great Defeat; we demand Victory.

How and when will come this revelation to the senses as well as to the soul, this Victory growing out of the great Defeat and turning it into Victory? Will it come suddenly like the flash of lightning out of a clear sky? That would seem to be implied by the disciples' report of the Master's words: "As the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west; so shall

also the coming of the Son of man be." Or will it come gradually, as spring comes to the earth? That would seem to be implied by the parable of the Seed Growing Secretly.

I do not know; I do not wish to know. I only know that Christianity is progressive, not stationary; not the history of a life long passed away, but the history of a life now present and never so powerful as to-day; that in everyday walks a better to-morrow; that Christ is a living and present Personality, not merely a sacred memory; that the prayer, "Nearer, my God, to thee," will have its answer in the history of the race, as it has its answer in the experience of the individual; that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God has prepared for his family of children, when they shall have grown to manhood.

XI

A SERENE SPIRIT IN A STRENUOUS AGE

How to preserve a serene spirit in a strenuous age is indeed a difficult problem. So many voices are repeating to us the cry of the conductor in the subway, "Hurry up! Step lively!" Life is marching at double quick, and we must not fall behind. It is an age of steam and of electricity. If we are to keep pace with our fellows, we must work like steam and think like lightning. And this not merely to make what men call a success, not merely to make as much money for ourselves and our families or win as good a place and as high honours as the men at our side. Strenuous endeavour is necessary if we are to do our share of the world's work, if we are to be

really useful citizens in a busy, bustling, racing Republic.

The time is so short! Grant that we have the full threescore years and ten in which to live. The first twenty-five years are spent in preparation; one third of life is gone. Twenty-five years follow of life at full tide. There is no dead line at fifty. But the tide turns at fifty, and thereafter begins to ebb. And of the twenty-five, thirty-five, or forty years of active life after the years of preparation, one third is spent in sleep. Arnold Bennett has written a fascinating little book entitled "How to Live on Twenty-Four Hours a Day." But we do not have twenty-four hours a day. Take out what is indispensable for rest and meals, and we have at the outside scarcely fourteen hours a day.

And there is so much to be done: a livelihood to be earned; a home to be kept up; children to be trained and educated; a city, a village, a State and a nation to be governed; a church to be maintained; the poor to be cared for; and a disordered world to be put in order. And we are told

that we cannot delegate this work. Reformers cry out to us that we cannot select a few wise and virtuous men to govern for us; we must ourselves govern — must study earnestly, judge wisely, rule vigorously. Ministers cry out to us that no hierarchy, Protestant or Catholic, can do the work of the Church for us. Chosen leaders may steer, but each one of us must pull an oar. Good men and women are knocking at our doors calling on us to enlist with them in charitable, educational, and moral reform. They summon us to clean the streets, establish sanitation, emancipate labour, banish the liquor saloon and the gambling hell, succour the poor, provide childhood life for the children, broaden education, revive the churches, carry on mission work in the cities, in the newly settled rural regions, in the old dismantled rural regions, and in foreign lands.

These voices are all appealing. This work is all so useful, so valuable, so indispensable. We can neglect none of it without injury to ourselves and our children. What shall we do?

Where shall we begin? Which of these voices shall we heed? Which of these leaders shall we follow? We are worse bested than was Hogarth's distressed musician.

And our places of rest and refuge are taken from us. We used to rest at home; but now, returning from the office or the store, we are greeted by wife and daughters with calls for some beneficent activity, some sorely needed contribution of money, or energy, or both. We used to rest in the church; but now the demand is insistent for a working church. The Church of the Heavenly Rest is replaced by the Church of the Earthly Activity. There are times when the text which most appeals to us is: "Oh, that I had wings like a dove! then would I fly away and be at rest."

Are, then, the days of serenity ended? Must we regard the grace of peace as a lost grace? Must we postpone all hope of rest until Death takes us in his arms and lulls us into the dreamless sleep? I do not think so. I believe that we may cultivate a serene spirit in the midst of a strenuous

life; that we may be at peace even while we fight a good fight.

Our time is not so short nor is the work which presses on us so great as we sometimes think. Our work is not to be accomplished in a single lifetime. Life is continuous. No generation achieves anything. It simply coöperates with generations that went before and with generations that are to come after in achieving something. The raw cotton enters the mill at one door; the completed sheeting goes out at the other door. No one pair of hands has made a sheet out of the cotton. The little child enters the primary school, he graduates from the university. No one teacher has made the man out of the boy. So it is in life. We are coöperating with our fellows; some of them contemporaries, some of them our ancestors, some of them our children and our children's children. It only belongs to us to do the work which is allotted to the present generation. In the Church we carry on the work which Paul began and which others will carry on after we are dead. In the State we inherit from

the Puritans their incompleting product and carry forward one more process toward its completion.

We are not responsible to purify the Nation, banish corruption, put an end to intemperance and greed, make the special interests subordinate to the public welfare. We are only responsible to do what can be done in a lifetime toward the work of producing a society which is obedient to the Ten Commandments and inspired by the spirit of the Golden Rule. Says Jesus, "One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye have not laboured: others have laboured, and ye are entered into their labour." We are not responsible to gather a harvest; we are only responsible to do one life's work in a process which requires many hundreds of such lives before the final achievement can be reached.

And in this work no one of us is called upon to have a share in every important service, any more than in the army any one soldier is called upon to be in the cavalry, the infantry, the artillery, and the engineering corps; or, in the cotton factory, each worker is called upon to take a part in each

one of the successive operations necessary for the production of the sheet; or, in a school or college, each teacher is responsible to teach in every department necessary to make a completed education. Listen to the voices that call on you long enough to decide which one or which two or three you will heed. Then take up the one or the two or the three pieces of work which most appeal to you — and leave the others alone. Make yourself responsible for doing one thing. Hold yourself to a high standard, resolving to do that one thing well, and resolutely refuse to give hearings to other calls.

It is important that there should be a Panama Canal, but that furnishes no reason why I should go to Panama and help to dig it. You are not responsible for the work for all ages, but only for this age. You are not responsible for the world, but only for your world. Choose the world for which you will be responsible and give yourself to it with singleness of service. If you will recognize that you are responsible only for the share of a single worker in the work of

your generation, you will relieve yourself of that kind of perplexity which comes from attempting to assume impossible obligations. The man who thinks himself under obligations to render service at every opportunity which opens before him is hardly more sane than the man who said that he did not want much land, he only wanted to buy all the land that adjoined his own. You must edit your work as we edit the *Outlook*. We return many more manuscripts than we should like to publish than we accept. We can accept only as many as the limitations of our space permit us to print. So you are to accept only those invitations to work which your limitations of time and strength permit you to accept with hope of successful achievement. The fact that the other invitations are also for useful work is no reason for accepting them.

So far you can agree with me, whatever your religious faith or lack of faith. You may not be able to agree with me in what follows.

The work in which I am engaged is not my work, it is my Father's work. He has assigned it to me.

To him I am responsible for the way in which I carry it on. All that he asks of me is my best endeavour. I am not under obligation to succeed; I am only under obligation to do as well as I can that very little portion of humanity's common task which he has allotted to me. From 1870 to 1887 I was preaching to a village congregation which rarely numbered over seventy-five. Then I was called to Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, to preach to a congregation which numbered from fifteen hundred to two thousand. I was sometimes asked if I did not feel it a great responsibility to stand in Henry Ward Beecher's pulpit and preach in that historic church to such a congregation. I answered then, and I answer now, No. The responsibility of preaching to fifteen hundred people is no greater than the responsibility of preaching to seventy-five. The responsibility is the same in both cases: it is to speak the truth as God gives me to see the truth, and to speak it as simply and as clearly as I can, without fear and without favour. In fact, I never feel my responsibility quite so keenly as when I am talking to an

individual who has come to me with some problem of his spiritual life and I realize the difficulty of clearing away the prejudices, his and mine, which shadow our minds, and make real intercommunication of life between us difficult.

But I am not merely working under my Father's orders, I am working with my Father's comradeship. We are working together, and I am responsible only to do my share in our partnership work. This is what Jesus Christ means when he says: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you." A yoke is an instrument for doing work. It is also an instrument for uniting two workers together. If I take Christ's work upon me, I am yoked to him and we do the work together. This is what Paul means when he says, "We are labourers together with God." I plant a seed in the garden; nature produces the flower. I plant a thought in a human soul; God produces the character.

I send this letter out, not knowing that it will help you; not knowing whether it will help any

SERENE SPIRIT IN A STRENUOUS AGE 81

one. To give it any fruitage in a human life is beyond my power. That is God's part of our partnership. My responsibility is ended when I have written it and sent it forth on its mission. I shoot it, like Longfellow's arrow, into the air. Whether I shall ever find it again in the heart of a friend, it is not for me to know. It is enough that He knows; and so I can let it go on its errand with a serene spirit.

XII

THE PRIVILEGE OF BEING A MINISTER

I SYMPATHIZE with you in your disappointment at being prevented from going into the ministry. For it affords not only a very useful but a very happy life; perhaps no more useful than other lives, but, to my thinking, of all lives the happiest — to one who is fitted for it.

In a village a hundred disciples of Jesus Christ, who possess something of his spirit and wish to carry on the work which he has left his followers to complete, unite for that purpose and form a church. Whether this church is part of a universal church and is a divine organization, or is a local body, human in its form and method, and divine only in the spirit which actuates it, has been and still is hotly debated. Into that debate I do not enter. The purpose of those who con-

stitute the church is the same in either case. They can do much of Christ's work incidentally in their daily vocations: the lawyer in administering justice, the doctor in healing the sick, the teacher in instructing her pupils, the merchant in ministering to the physical needs of the community, the home-keeper in managing the home.

But they wish to do more than this. They wish to do something, directly and immediately, to pervade the community with the principles of the Sermon on the Mount and the spirit of the Good Samaritan. They look about for some man who they think is by temperament and training specially equipped to give himself wholly and unreservedly to the good offices of faith, hope, and love. They say to him: We will provide for your daily needs. We will give you food, clothing, and shelter for yourself and your family. You may dismiss from your mind the cares which occupy the main portion of our thoughts. You may henceforth accept literally the Master's injunction: "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet

for your body, what ye shall put on." We will take that thought for you. We invite you to carry on the work which the Master intrusted to the twelve in his lifetime; to do in this village what they did in Palestine: "And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give."

You may think I idealize. Perhaps I do. There are churches which seem to regard the minister as a hired man, employed simply to serve them; which think that time given by him to the community is taken from them. There are churches which do not keep their promises, which pay their minister his salary very irregularly, or not at all. But I have been for fifty years in the ministry; I have never in my life made a bargain with a church; I have always acted on this theory of the minister's relation to the church, and of myself as their minister to serve not them but the community in which they dwell; I have ministered in the West and in the

East, in a little village, in a moderate-sized city, and in the great metropolis; and sometimes to churches that were decidedly poor; never to a wealthy church. And I have never found a church that failed to respond to this view of our relationship, or to provide according to its means for my support. When it could not provide enough, I remembered Paul's example and provided what I needed by my own industry.

To be thus freed from the drudgery which is a part of most industrial vocations, and to give one's self with an untroubled mind and undivided attention simply to doing good, entirely regardless of the question whether it pays, is — at least so I have found it — a delightful life. It is true that the minister will be sure to have some unreasonable parishioners. So the lawyer will have some unreasonable clients, the doctor some unreasonable patients, the merchant some unreasonable customers, and the farmer some weather that will seem to him very unreasonable. And the minister will not always be reasonable himself. But, making full allowance for all hindrances and

drawbacks, the life of the ministry, rightly taken, is a very joyous one. The minister who does not find it so had better look at home for the fault before looking anywhere else.

This life is closed to you. What then? There is no time to waste in self-pity. There are other doors of Christian service open to you. The same mail which brought me your letter brought me one from a layman whose daily life is very arduous, who lives in a small village and is a member of an inconspicuous church. One sentence of his letter would be worth printing on every church calendar and framed and hung up in every parish house:

THE WORLD HAS SEEN WHAT GOD AND MARTIN LUTHER HAVE DONE, WHAT GOD AND JOHN CALVIN HAVE DONE, WHAT GOD AND JOHN WESLEY HAVE DONE, WHAT GOD AND D. L. MOODY HAVE DONE, AND WHAT GOD AND MANY OTHERS HAVE DONE, BUT THE WORLD HAS YET TO SEE WHAT GOD AND ALL HIS PEOPLE CAN DO.

We have treated the church as though it were simply a school, and the minister simply a teacher.

We have treated religion and theology as synonyms, and substituted talking about religion for practising it. We have summed up the whole of Christ's commission by the word "preach," and we have left out "heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils." We have incited the laity to work, but the only work we have given them to do is the work of religious teaching and public worship on a small scale, in the prayer-meeting and the Sunday-school. There are a great many laymen who have neither the temperament nor the training for public teaching or public prayer; we blame them because they do not take up work for which they are not prepared, but which is the only work that is offered to them. The church is not merely a school; it is an industrial organization. The minister is not merely a teacher; he is a captain of spiritual industry. But the industry which ought to be carried on by others under general guidance and inspiration has been thrown on him; and, dividing his energies between teaching and administration, he is not able to do either very well.

The Church of Christ does not want more ministers nearly so much as it wants more laymen; not passengers, but crew; not an army looking on to see how David will fight, but an army which will follow David into the battle; not sentimentalists, but men of devout spirit inspiring practical philanthropy; men who are not only harmless as doves, but also wise as serpents; men of worldly wisdom, who will use in the service of the Church their practical good sense in making it effectual for promoting the kingdom of heaven in the community, and helping to make that Kingdom truly "at hand."

There is plenty of opportunity for you in Christian ministering, though you may never be a Christian minister.

XIII

LIFE PREACHING

Do you think it a person's duty to speak to every one with whom he comes in contact about becoming a Christian? Some say that this should be done by every Christian. It seems to me that earnest living for Christ from day to day has greater influence for righteousness than talking. E. L. C.

The minister here — as well as ministers in many other places, I believe — is always insisting on public prayer and testimony from everybody; also the duty of constantly preaching to one's friends and acquaintances. This is regarded as the chief proof of conversion. Little or no emphasis is laid upon a practical Christianity of kind words and deeds; on unselfish and upright living. Do you regard such teaching and practice as sane and reasonable? O. E. U.

IT IS unfortunate that religion has come to be tabooed in ordinary social conversation. We can talk about politics, business, literature, music, art, our homes, our friends, the weather; but we seem to regard the religious life as too sacred to be brought into common con-

versation. This may be partly because of reserve, partly because we fear the suspicion of ostentation, partly because we have reacted against the Phariseism which delights in exhibitory piety. But, whatever the cause, the result is unfortunate. There is no more reason why religious convictions should be excluded from common conversation than political convictions; no more reason why we should tacitly forbid all reference to our religious life than why we should put a similar prohibition on art, literature, or domestic life. But the questions of our correspondents are not, Would it be better for Christians to be more free in the natural expression of their religious faith? but, Is it the duty of every Christian to set himself to work to impart his religious life to his neighbour, either by public address or personal conversation? To both these questions I answer decidedly, No!

It is no more the duty of every man to attempt to cure sick souls than to attempt to cure insane minds or diseased bodies. It is the duty of every Christian to lead a Christlike life. This means

doing unto others as we would have others do unto us; it means returning good for evil, loving our enemies, blessing those that curse us, doing good to those that hate us; it means counting him the greatest who renders the most unselfish service; laying down our lives for others, as Christ laid down his life for us; loving others as he loved us. But it does not mean assuming to be the spiritual director of our neighbour, assuming to tell him what he ought to do and what he ought not to do, assuming to dictate to him his duty or point out to him the path in which he should walk. On the contrary, it is a good general rule in life, though by no means a universal one, not to offer to others unasked advice, unless they stand in such relation to us that the unasked advice is expected, as it is by a pupil from his teacher and by a child from his parent. Even the minister will do better who succeeds in inducing his people to call upon him with their spiritual problems and their intellectual doubts, than he who goes after them and demands their confidence.

It is no more every man's duty to speak in

prayer-meeting than it is every man's duty to preach in the pulpit; and no man should pray in public under compulsion. Prayer should always be a spontaneous and willing offering to God. I remember very well the humiliating experience in which I learned this lesson. It was in my first pastorate. I had the impression then that every Christian ought to be able to speak and pray in prayer-meeting, and that it was his duty to do so. I urged this duty upon a man who had just joined the church. Very reluctantly he undertook a task for which he was not fitted. He broke down in the middle of his prayer, and I finished it for him by repeating the Lord's Prayer. I do not know whether he ever recovered from the humiliation of that night, but it was I who should have been, and was, humiliated, and I resolved then that I never would urge any person to pray or to speak in public against his will, and I have never done so since.

Private conversation is even more difficult than public speech. There are some who have the sympathy, the tact, the colloquial skill, to ap-

proach comparative strangers in personal appeal without offending them; but to do this requires tact, sympathy, and colloquial skill. If you will read with unprejudiced attention any one of the Gospels, you will find that Jesus Christ rarely obtruded the subject of personal religion upon any individual in personal conversation. Nicodemus came to him for instruction. The woman at the well opened the conversation with him, and he turned it naturally and easily into a religious channel. The rich young ruler came running to him, knelt down in the way, and asked him, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" His religious conversations at the dinner-table grew naturally and easily out of some incident, as in the case of the woman who anointed his feet, or out of some words spoken by another, as in the case of the guest who said "Blessed are they who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." I doubt whether there is any incident in the Gospels which indicates that Jesus Christ ever forced the subject of spiritual life upon others in personal conversation; and his

94 . LETTERS TO UNKNOWN FRIENDS

public teaching was ordinarily delivered under circumstances which made it always easy for those to go away who did not care to hear him. He used neither physical nor moral pressure to force men into the kingdom of God.

It is the duty of every man, whether he calls himself Christian or not, to do what he can to make this both a better and a happier world, to lend a helping hand to his neighbour, to make his life a life of service, to be rich in good works. The farmer does this when he gathers the fruits of the earth and markets them, for so he is feeding the hungry. The mechanic does this when he invents, makes, or uses machinery to do the world's drudgery, for so he is releasing men from drudgery and making possible for them a higher, freer, and more joyous life. The doctor does this in relieving suffering, curing disease, preventing epidemics. The lawyer does this in interpreting and administering social justice. The teacher does this in gathering out of the experience of the past light to be shed on the pathway of the future. The minister does this by holding up to those who

will listen ideals of truth, purity, and love, by which others may be inspired and which they may follow.

But it is no more the duty of the farmer to hold up the ideals of the pulpit by speech than it is the duty of the minister to raise the fruits of the earth to feed the hungry. Paul has expressed this very clearly: "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness."

My correspondents are both right. "Earnest living for Christ from day to day has greater influence for righteousness than talking." Our emphasis should be laid "upon a practical Christianity of kind words and deeds; on unselfish and upright living."

But these kind words and deeds must be the

natural fruit of a real, sincere Christian life. Not what we say, not what we do, but what we are, exerts the greatest influence. Thomas Carlyle writes to John Sterling about four months before the latter's death from consumption took place: "If you were never able to go through any active exertion, or to write a single line except an occasional letter, or to exercise any influence over mankind, except the influence of your thoughts and feelings upon your children and upon those by whom you are personally known and valued, you would still be, I sincerely think, the most useful man I know. . . . There are certainly few persons living who are capable of doing so much good by their indirect and unconscious influence as you are, and I do not believe you have ever had an adequate conception of the extent of the influence you possess, and the quantity of good which you produce by it."

What we do unconsciously by our character is vastly more important than what we do with deliberate purpose by either our words or our deeds.

XIV

RELIGIOUS CONVERSATION

A CORRESPONDENT writes to me saying: "Some time I wish you might be interested to write in the *Outlook* about the disinclination to ask for moral advice, and about a man's disinclination to talk to another about such things as duty, right, conduct, etc. It would seem as though a college professor would find it very easy and suitable to talk to boys, or to a boy, about good and evil, and that there is no more important subject to be found. Yet how often, when you see it tried, you observe the young men look down, grow sheepish, and observe a cessation of the spirit of intimacy that was there before. I fancy the Greek youths looked their tutors frankly in the eye when right and wrong were spoken of. Here we are all,

minister and teacher, father and citizen, all professing the same work: a better quality of manhood; yet everywhere we see this remarkable hesitation to go directly about it. One of the professors of —— University was recently talking with me about the peculiarity of college preachers who come to that university. Some who can make stirring appeals to men in masses fail in individual cases. ‘But,’ he said, ‘Doctor Abbott has both kinds of ability. Boys will confer with him and will return for other conferences.’ It seems to me that you would render a very signal service if you would take a look at your way of doing this and then write a few pointed suggestions to preachers, college men, and high-school teachers, on the necessity of direct moral teaching and the way to go at it.”

I have published this letter at length, though not in full, because it will be quite as interesting to the readers of the *Outlook* as anything which I can write in reply to it. The problem it presents is a difficult one. I do not pretend to offer any

solution. I can only make, for the benefit of parents, teachers, and pastors, such contribution toward its solution as may be furnished by the experience of one person.

I have long been convinced that one cause of the apparent failure of efficiency in the church is the diminution of pastoral service. Neither eloquence of preaching in the pulpit, nor skill of administration in the parish, can take the place of personal contact between the preacher and his people. If I had the time and strength, I would rather talk with five hundred individual inquirers who sought me out for conference, than preach to a congregation of five thousand auditors who came to listen and went away, many of them to forget what they had heard. In these personal conferences the pastor or teacher comes in direct contact with the individual soul. He knows the doubts, the difficulties, the dangers, of the individual. He endeavors to meet those difficulties with his solutions, those doubts with his arguments, those dangers with his counsels; and he finds, if he is open-minded, wherein the solutions

100 LETTERS TO UNKNOWN FRIENDS

fail to solve, the arguments fail to convince, and the counsels fail to guide. He gets just what he does not get in the pulpit, the response of the soul, and knows, at least in a little degree, wherein he has succeeded, wherein he has failed.

The ordinary method of pastoral visiting apparently in vogue in our day seems to me of very trifling use. The pastor goes to the house, makes his formal call, and departs. He rarely sees the men, and not infrequently the women are sorry he has come and glad when he has gone. He has no right to demand their confidence, and, interrupted perhaps in their social engagements or their domestic duties, they are, at the time of the call, in no mood to give him their confidence. He perhaps establishes a little social relationship which makes his ministry on the next Sabbath slightly more effective. Rarely can he do more than this.

In college conferences the conditions are reversed. The student comes to the preacher. He comes because he wants to see the preacher, because he has some question to bring to the

preacher, because at least he has some wish for personal contact with the preacher. The door of his own soul is opened, and the preacher, if he has skill and sympathy, may enter in. In this respect the custom of the Roman Catholic Church is much wiser than the custom of the Protestant churches. In the Protestant churches the pastor goes to the people; in the Roman Catholic Church the people come to the pastor. In the confessional he meets them self-prepared for the conference, and seeking it at his hands.

At the same time, I envy the minister who is able to go from house to house and bring about, in this method of visitation, personal, intimate, spiritual conferences. I know one clergyman who frequently preaches in a university where I have also been wont to preach. Whenever he goes there, I am told that he looks up the students from his city, visits them in their rooms, and through these visits gets acquainted with other students as well. I wish I had his ability. I am sure that I should fail if I undertook to imitate his example. I should be shy of going to the

102 LETTERS TO UNKNOWN FRIENDS

student's room, lest I should find myself unwelcome, and perhaps come at a time when he was busy with his work, or at a time when he was enjoying some companionship that he did not wish interrupted, or under some other circumstance which would make the visit an unwelcome intrusion. I have, therefore, simply opened the way for students who wished a conference with me, and limited my pastoral work in schools and colleges to those who, when the way was opened, sought an interview.

It is not enough, however, that the door of the room is opened and a social welcome given to the inquirer. The door of the mind must be opened, and whatever his doubt, his difficulty, his temptation, or even his sin, he must find a welcoming reception. The author of "Fraulein Schmidt and Mr. Anstruther" puts this matter very well.

"For two years, from sixteen to eighteen, I was earnest, prayerful, humbly seeking after righteousness. Then one day, when questionings had come upon me that my conscience could not approve, I went to the pastor who had prepared

me, as confidently as I would go with a toothache to a dentist, and bared my sensitive conscience to him, and begged him to have my thoughts arranged and my doubts and questionings settled. To my amazement and extreme fright I beheld him shocked, angry, hardly able to endure hearing me tell all I had been wondering. It seemed very strange. I sat at last with downcast eyes, silent, ashamed, my heart shrunk back into reserve and frost. I was not being helped; I was being scolded, and bitterly scolded. At last at the door some special word of blame stung me to heat, and I cried: 'Herr Pastor, when my tongue is bad and I show it to a doctor, he gives me a pill. Are you not the doctor of my spirit? Why, then, when I come to you to be healed, do you, instead of giving me medicine, so cruelly rate me?'"

A great many young people are kept from their pastors by the belief that their pastors cannot understand them, and perhaps will not even try. In my pastoral work with students I have been aided by the fact that almost all the doubts which perplex them have perplexed me. I am consti-

tutionally a skeptic, and also constitutionally a mystic. If to any of my readers this statement seems inconsistent, I can only say that most of us are made up of inconsistencies. I have never been able to believe anything simply because other people do, and a command to me to believe has always awakened my doubts. I do not think that any purely intellectual opinion is ever a sin. Intellectual opinions may grow out of sin; intellectual opinions may lead to sin; but an intellectual opinion is neither a sin nor a virtue. Sin and virtue lie solely in the will. The desire to know the truth and to follow the truth to whatever disagreeable conclusions the truth may lead, is a virtue. The desire not to know the truth, the willingness to follow a falsehood because it will lead one in pleasant paths, is a sin. When, therefore, any student comes to me with a sincere desire to know the truth, the fact that his point of view is absolutely different from mine does nothing whatever to impair our fellowship. We are one in our desire to know the truth and to follow the truth wherever it will lead us.

A student once came to me saying that he had been a member of the church, but he had lost his faith — first in the church, then in the Bible, then in the spiritual life, until he did not know whether he believed there was a God in the world or a spirit in the body. I said to him, “If there is not a God in the world you want to know it. If there is not a spirit in the body you want to know that also. Whatever the truth is, let us try to find it.” I think he was surprised at getting such a word of welcome from a minister. And when we had talked an hour and a half, and I had given him my reasons for believing that there is a God in the world, and there is a spirit in the body, he went away, if not convinced, at least with the door opened to him, through which he might recover the faith which he had lost.

A third advantage which I have possessed, which the ordinary pastor does not possess, has been the fact that most of my conferences have been with comparative strangers. Young men and young women in a school or college will come to a visiting preacher with a freedom with which

they will not come to their own pastor, just as a boy will often go to a comparative stranger with a freedom with which he will not go to his own father, and perhaps still more, a girl will go to a stranger with a freedom with which she will not go to her own mother. The letters which in this way I am answering through the columns of the *Outlook* come to me from unknown friends, and they write to me more freely because I am unknown to them. Early in my college pastoral work I discontinued the habit of asking the name of the student who called upon me, and quickly forgot it when it was volunteered. It is needless perhaps to say that the secrets in these personal interviews have been kept as sacredly as if I were a Roman Catholic priest, and though the letters from unknown friends are sometimes printed, the name is never given, nor anything by which the unknown friend could be identified.

The three suggestions then which I venture to make to parents, teachers, and pastors, in reply to the letter given above, are these:

Make it easy for any one who wishes an inter-

view with you to get the interview. Count such sacred fellowship always as of the highest importance. Do not begrudge the time given to it nor regret the interruption which it involves.

Meet the inquirer with an open mind and a sympathetic heart. Do not resent any question of doubt or any temptation or sin confessed. If one comes to a teacher or pastor to confess a sin, it is because the sin is a burden. If we are to do anything for the one confessing we must put ourselves in his place and bear his burden with him; we must get his point of view and share his perplexity with him.

Regard all such interviews as a sacred confidence, never under any circumstances to be reported to another, and not even treasured in your own memory.

XV

THE SABBATH PROBLEM

A college boy and a hard student asks me, writes a correspondent, "Why can't I play tennis on Sunday?" As a matter of fact, I do not see any harm in it, for he lives in the country, where the question of example is not involved — if it is to be considered. The act of playing tennis is innocent enough. But my Puritanical upbringing asks, "Is this a conscious disregard of a higher law?" Any thoughtful boy knows that it is less hurtful than spending the afternoon in idle chatter with other young people. His problem has to do only with tennis playing — or similar diversions — at home only.

CHARLES DICKENS in a paper to be found in the 34th volume of his collected works, published by the Scribners, describes a Sunday scene which he once observed in the west of England, in a small village distant about seventy miles from London. In the morning he attended service in the village church, a low-roofed building with small arched windows through

which the sun's rays streamed in. "The impressive service of the Church of England was spoken — not merely *read* — by the gray-headed minister, and the responses delivered by his auditors, with an air of sincere devotion as far removed from affectation or display as from coldness or indifference." At the close of the service the villagers saluted the minister as he passed, and some of them held brief conferences with him. In the evening, about half an hour before sunset, Mr. Dickens walked out toward the church again, was surprised to hear the hum of voices and occasionally a shout of merriment from the meadow beyond the churchyard, and found the boys and young men of the place engaged in an animated game of cricket, while the older people were scattered about, some watching the game, some gathering flowers, some engaged in social conversation. "I was," he says, "in the very height of the pleasure which the contemplation of this scene afforded me, when I saw the old clergyman making his way toward us. I trembled for an

angry interruption to the sport, and was almost on the point of crying out, to warn the cricketers of his approach; he was so close upon me, however, that I could do nothing but remain still, and anticipate the reproof that was preparing. What was my agreeable surprise to see the old gentleman standing at the stile, with his hands in his pockets, surveying the whole scene with evident satisfaction! And how dull I must have been not to have known till my friend the grandfather (who, by-the-by, said he had been a wonderful cricketer in his time) told me, that it was the clergyman himself who had established the whole thing: that it was his field they played in; and that it was he who had purchased the stumps, bats, ball, and all!"

This Sabbath scene — reverent worship in which the whole community united in the morning, innocent recreation in which the old and young partook in the afternoon with the cordial approval of the church and the minister — appears to me to furnish an ideal of Sabbath observance.

The Sabbath question is two questions: What ought the law to forbid? What ought Christian example to commend?

The standard for the law is set by the Fourth Commandment. The Fourth Commandment forbids work; and it forbids nothing else. It requires rest; and it requires nothing else. There is no suggestion in this Commandment of any religious service, no suggestion of any prohibition of innocent and healthful recreation. The day is, indeed, a day to be kept holy to the Lord, but holiness to the Lord is not inconsistent with festivity and rejoicing. That it was not so regarded by the ancient Hebrews is evident from an interesting incident recorded in the book of Nehemiah. The people were brought together in a kind of primitive camp-meeting to hear the Law of God read to them, and interpreted. A pulpit was constructed and preachers were appointed to conduct the service. "So they read in the book of the Law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading" — not a bad example for modern

preaching. But when the people, moved by the solemnity of the occasion, wept, the preachers bade them not weep. "This day is holy unto the Lord your God," they said, "mourn not nor weep. Go your way. Eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy unto our Lord. Neither be ye sorry, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." And it is added that "the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them."

There is some reason for believing that this day was a Sabbath day, but whether it was or not, it was a day holy unto the Lord, and the example set by Nehemiah and his preachers in sending the people away to festivity, rejoicing, and mirth, after the sacred service of the morning, is one to be commended to the consideration of those who go to the Bible to learn what the Sabbath is for.

We ought by law to protect the workingman's right to his day of rest. It is true that all work

cannot be stopped on the Sabbath day. The steamer cannot anchor in mid-ocean, nor the train halt in the middle of the continent, nor the hotels close their doors and cease to serve food to their guests, nor, I believe, the iron furnaces shut down. But work should be diminished, and as far as possible should cease, on this day. The law should provide that every workingman should have one day for rest and recreation in every week, as it should provide for him adequate hours of rest and recreation in every day. But it should not determine for him how he should employ either the protected day in the week or the protected hours in the day. This is a question every man should be left free to determine for himself.

The Sabbath law should simply prohibit unnecessary employment and such forms of activity, whether work or play, whether religious or secular, as disturb the day of rest for the community. It may legitimately prohibit the paid ball game, with its gate receipts, its great crowd, its inevitable disturbance of the day's quiet. But it may equally legitimately prohibit a

procession, whether secular or religious, from making such use of the streets as disturbs the quiet either of worshippers in the churches or of householders in their homes. The whole function of law is not to enforce a religious obligation on the people, but to provide the people with the freedom which will enable them to enjoy their worship and their rest undisturbed.

The question of Christian example is different. To the Christian the Sabbath is a day of inspiration as well as of rest and recreation. He uses the rest of this day and the relief it brings him from ordinary weekly toil, for ministry to the higher life. He may find this ministry in the church service, or in reading and reflection at home, or in quiet communion with his own soul and with God in the field or the forest; but he uses it for something more than mere relaxation. It furnishes him an opportunity for that repose, both of body and of spirit, without which the best health of the body and the best development of the spirit are impossible.

But there is no reason why this use of a part of

the Sabbath should be regarded as inconsistent with the use of another part of the Sabbath for mere relaxation and recreation, provided such form of relaxation and recreation are selected as do not entail unnecessary work on others and do not violate the Sabbath rest of others. The day should be made one of rest and gladness, a festival, not a fast day, a day of liberty, not a day of bondage; and my own belief is that if the ministers, the churches, the parents, the saintly people who find great rest and refreshment in the spiritual uses of the day, would join with the rest of the community in making a part of the day available for innocent rest and recreation, they would make the whole day better serve both themselves and their neighbours.

The Sabbath question is part of a much larger question and cannot be solved by itself. So long as we think that religion is something apart from life, that it is religious to pray and irreligious to play, religious to weep and irreligious to laugh, so long we shall think there is a certain incongruity in attempting to mingle worship and recreation

in the same day; so long we shall think the day is given to God if it is devoted to Bible and Church, and is given to ourselves and to the world if it is given to playing games. To Charles Kingsley life seemed so full of God that he writes, "I see no inconsistency in making my sermons while I am cutting wood and no 'bizarrerie' in talking one moment to one man about the points of a horse, and the next moment to another about the mercy of God to sinners." When life becomes thus full of God to us, when we realize the full meaning of the truth that God has entered into human life in order that human life may become divine, when we remember that Jesus Christ in his parables found his ideals of human character in the merchantman doing business, the fisherman working with his boats and his nets, the farmer sowing his seed, the steward administering an estate, and compared himself to one playing in the market-place, that the children might dance to his music, we shall be able to realize that there is nothing irreligious in innocent recreations on a day given by the Father to his children and to be

consecrated by them to preparation for higher and holier living throughout the week.

I have not attempted to give a direct answer to your question, because a direct answer is impossible. "Circumstances alter cases." I wish that the churches and the ministers acted in the spirit of the church and the minister described by Charles Dickens in the incident recounted above. But where they do not, where the religious feeling of the community is strongly opposed to all recreation on the Sabbath, some attention must be paid to that sentiment. The Sabbath should be a day of liberty; but our liberty is not to be used needlessly to wound or offend even the prejudices of our fellow-men. Whether in any given community it is right to play lawn tennis on Sunday depends, therefore, in part upon the sentiment of the better class in that community. It also depends in part upon the weekday work of the individual, and upon the opportunities for service of others which the Sabbath may afford him. Perhaps the college boy to whom my correspondent refers

can get his out-of-door recreation by acting as Scout Master to village boys who have little inspiring companionship; perhaps he can render service by taking a class in an afternoon Sunday School or mission; perhaps he can render service in making the Sabbath an enjoyable one to the home. All these questions must be taken into consideration. I can only say that I see nothing necessarily inconsistent with either the Jewish or the Christian conception of the Sabbath, in such social fellowship and innocent recreation as do not entail serious labour upon others.

Nor have I undertaken to solve the Sabbath question. The question what shall we do with our Sabbath cannot be considered apart from the larger question, What shall we do with our life? A little child once asked his mother, "Is the Sabbath the Lord's Day?" "Yes," she replied. "And has he given us the other six days for our own?" "Ye-es — why — yes, I suppose so," she replied. "Wasn't it good of him," said the child, "to keep only one day for himself and give us the other six days for ourselves?" This

childish conception is not uncommon, and wherever it is entertained the Sabbath question is insoluble. No man who works all the week under such pressure that he wakes Sunday morning exhausted in mind and body is in any condition for the spiritual refreshment of the church services. No one who works all the week trying to get all that he can out of his fellow-men, is in any condition on the Sabbath to join in sincere, genuine reverence for One who said, "He that will be greatest among you let him be servant of all." We can never learn how to rest *in* God on the Sabbath unless we have learned how to work *for* God throughout the week.

XVI

CREATIVE EVOLUTION

It is stated in the first chapter of Genesis, "God created man in His own image, *in the image of God created he him.*" How can you reconcile this statement with your evolution theory? To say that man, "made in the image of God," by God Himself, is a natural growth from "the fishes of the sea," and "the birds of the air," and "the beasts of the field," is incompatible with the Word of God, for "God created man in His own image," "He made him a little lower than the angels," and "we are His offspring."

"EVOLUTION," says John Fiske, who is perhaps America's best interpreter of evolution, "is God's way of doing things." Creation is growth and growth is creation. The natural is supernatural and the supernatural is natural; there is no difference between the two. Evolution is simply the history of a process. The scientific evolutionist makes no attempt to explain the cause of phenomena.

Jesus Christ foretold the doctrine of evolution in the significant parable, "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come."

The kingdom of God is a growth.

And it is a natural growth. The earth bringeth forth fruit of herself. God is not apart from nature, making it, as a carpenter is apart from a box; he is in nature developing it, as the spirit is in the body shaping it. Where growth is God is; where God is growth is. For the secret of growth is life; and the secret of life is God. He is "the fountain of life." Whoever finds him, says the Hebrew wise man, finds life. It is not less true that whoever finds life finds God.

In the museum at Harvard University are some remarkably beautiful glass flowers. They are

made in Germany, and are used to illustrate the structure of the flowers. The maker of these glass flowers takes some glass, a lamp, a blow-pipe, colouring material, and constructs a flower. It is then packed in cotton and sent to Harvard University, a finished product. When God makes a flower, he tells a bird to drop a seed in the ground. The seed he endows with power to bring forth the root, the stem, the leaf, the bud, the blossom. It is never a finished product; it is growing and living until it dies, and then it decays and drops back into the earth again. A boy builds a snow man. As soon as it is finished the wind blows upon it, the sun shines upon it, it trickles down in moisture, and presently disappears. When God builds a man, he gives to the mother, by a process entirely natural, a little babe, and the babe grows with feeding, with exercise, with counsel, guidance, and control, into boyhood, youth, young manhood, old age. He is a living, growing being. All God's work is done by process or growth. Evolution is, what Bergson has called it, "creative evolution."

The kingdom of God in nature, in the individual, in society, is always as a seed cast into the ground. It always grows up in accordance with natural laws and under the influence of forces or a force stored in nature. That force is God himself working, not from without in, but from within outward.

Whatever may have been the origin of the race, that the individual man grows as the plant does from a seed, and that he passes through the various phases of animal life before he reaches the human form, can no longer be questioned. Embryology has studied the process, and we can see in the museum the forms which the embryonic man takes on in the process of his prenatal development. Man is a growth, not only from the cradle but before the cradle.

As far back as history can carry us society has been a growth. First was the family, then the tribe formed out of the intermarriage of different families, then the nation formed by the combination of different tribes. So civilization has been a growth; man groping his way through

successive experiments, endeavours, blunders, failures, successes, to this age of railways, steam-boats, telegraphs, telephones, motor cars, aeroplanes.

This truth of evolution is illustrated by the growth of the American people from thirteen Colonies to forty-eight States; from a narrow strip along the Atlantic Ocean to a Republic extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from the Gulf to the Lakes; from three million to ninety million. The growth of the nation, as the growth of the individual man, as the growth of the plant, as the growth of material civilization, has been a growth from a seed, by a natural process and under a natural law.

It is not more evident that personal, political, material, national creation is by a process of growth than it is that moral ideals are growths. A thousand years before Christ the law is issued to Israel: "Thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." This represents probably the highest ideal of

which the human conscience was capable at that time. It furnishes in concrete forms a protection to the four fundamental rights of man: his right to his person, his right to his family, his right to his property, and his right to his reputation. But this ideal does not satisfy Jesus Christ. He is not satisfied to say, "Thou shalt not kill"; he says, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you." He is not satisfied to say, "Thou shalt not commit adultery;" he says, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery; and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." He is not satisfied to say, "Thou shalt not steal"; he says, "Whosoever would be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever shall be chief among you, let him be your servant." He is not satisfied to say, "Thou shalt not bear false witness *against* thy neighbour"; he says, "I am the truth," and bids us be sincere and simple and full of truth, as he himself was.

These moral ideals are still growing, not in their essence as principles of righteousness, but in their application. "Thou shalt not kill" means in our time, Thou shalt not drive children to the mine or the factory where their life is stunted and they die before their time. "Thou shalt not commit adultery" means, Thou shalt not make marriage a mere commercial partnership, dissolvable at the wish of either of the parties. "Thou shalt not steal" means, Thou shalt pay fair wages to thy workingman, and thou shalt render to thy employer fair return for thy wage. "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour" means Thou shalt, as teacher in a great political campaign, try to tell thy readers the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, about the parties and their candidates.

Evolution has nothing to do with the causes of phenomena. It offers no explanation of causes. It is the history of a process. Evolution repeats in scientific form what Christ said in his parable: "The kingdom of God is growth," and the secret of that growth is life within, and the life is within

because God is within; he is within nature, within the individual man, within organized society.

This growth may be stunted, it may be mis-directed, it may even be a growth downward, not upward, a growth toward death, not toward life. Nothing is stationary. We are not; we are always moving, from the past to the future. We speak of the present; there is no present. The present is simply an infinitesimal point of time which we cross in going from the past to the future. Hold your watch in your hand, count the seconds. Those ten seconds have already become past history. The world on which we live is itself rushing through space at an incredible rate of speed, and, as if this were not enough, is at the same time revolving on its axis at an incredible rate of speed. We are travelling on a railway train which knows no stations; passengers get off, new passengers get on, but the train never stops. The world, the nation, society, the plant, the individual man, are in perpetual motion.

The body itself is like a river; new material is coming into it to make a new body, old material

is passing away from it because it is serviceable no longer. In a life of seventy years the man has probably had at least seven bodies.

What is true of the body is true of the mind. It is growing, better or worse, up or down, toward life or toward death. You who are reading these lines know either more or less than you did ten years ago. If you do not know more, you know less, for how much have you forgotten that you did know ten years ago? Unless new knowledge has come in to take the place of the old knowledge you are more ignorant than you were.

What is true of the mind is true of the spirit. You are either more virtuous or more vicious than you were ten years ago. You cannot stand still. Mothers wish to keep their children in innocence. It is impossible to keep a child innocent. Innocence and ignorance go together; virtue and knowledge go together. The child who does not know the difference between truth and falsehood is innocent. He is not virtuous until he knows that he can gain some real or apparent, some temporary or permanent advantage by falsehood,

and chooses to follow the truth and take the consequences. Virtue is a result of struggle, and struggle means growth, and growth means life. Where there is no struggle there is no growth, where there is no growth there is no life, and where there is no life there is decay.

The notion that evolution bows God out of the universe is a wholly erroneous notion. It brings God nearer to us. It makes every day a creative day. God is as truly in the grass, the herb, the tree, in the gardens of America this summer as he was in the day when he said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, the fruit tree yielding fruit after its kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth." He is as truly in all the operations of nature as he was when the Psalmist wrote, "He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills. . . . He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man." He is as truly in the growth and glory of America as he was in the promise of the growth and glory of Israel when Isaiah wrote, "The Gentiles shall come to thy

light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.” He is as truly the companion and friend of the individual soul as he was when the Hebrew poet wrote, “I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress; my God; in him will I trust.”

There is a mechanical theory of the universe which affirms that every phenomenon is produced by a phenomenon preceding; that there is growth in the universe, but no life. And this mechanical theory of the universe is no doubt accepted by some evolutionists, but it is not evolution. “Evolution is God’s way of doing things.” This is my answer to my correspondent. God is creating man in his own image. We are God’s offspring. He is creating man, as he creates everything else, by a process of vital growth, not by a process of mechanical manufacture.

XVII

WHY

What reason have we for believing in a Being who directs *all* the life of the universe, from that which is manifested in a globule of water to that which is manifested in the orderly movements of uncounted . . . worlds. . . . Why did Mount Pelée erupt? Why tornadoes? Why tidal waves to destroy all that the animal and vegetable kingdoms have laboured for years to create? Nature, with air, rain, frost, dew, sunshine, and I have co-laboured for ten years to raise peaches. I did my share; nature did hers; the trees thrived and grew apace, strong and luxuriant; in the pink blossom was the promise of a bounteous yield; a killing frost, and all was over.

IF YOU wish to acquaint yourself with the reasons which have led practically all students of nature to believe that there is an intelligent mind behind natural phenomena, you will find your purpose fairly well served in a recent book by a famous scientist, "The World of Life: A Manifestation of Creative Power,

Directive Mind, and Ultimate Purpose," by Alfred Russel Wallace. If you have not access to this book, you will find a very brief summary of it, with some illustrations of the arguments, in the *Outlook* of April 22, 1911, in an editorial entitled "The Great Architect." If you wish to see the arguments for a directive mind and ultimate purpose in creation very concisely stated, you will find such a statement in the following three possible ways of thinking of nature presented by James Martineau in his volume "A Study of Religion":

There are but three forms under which it is possible to think of the ultimate or immanent principle of the universe — Mind, Life, Matter: given the first, it is intellectually thought out; the second, it blindly grows; the third, it mechanically shuffles into equilibrium.

To us, as to most students, the second and third of these ways of thinking are unthinkable. They need only to be stated to be instantly rejected.

The scientist finds in the rocks masses of arrow-heads. From these masses of arrow-heads

he concludes that there were living in former times savage races possessed of intelligence, and using that intelligence to fulfil certain purposes which they had in mind. The philosophy which can see the evidence of intelligence in an Indian arrow-head, and can see no evidence of intelligence in the wing of a bird, is beyond my ability to comprehend. The wing of a bird, marvellously adapted by its mechanical structure to the purposes of flight, and marvellously adapted by its infinite gradations of colour for purposes of beauty, is one of the most perfect and one of the most exquisitely artistic of organizations.

Doubtless there are phenomena in nature, such as the eruption of Mount Pelée, which it is difficult to reconcile with a benevolent purpose animating all creation. This difficulty led the Persians to believe that there were two directive minds in the universe, the one animated by benevolence, the other animated by malice. This notion of two divinities, a good one and a bad one, was borrowed from Persian theology, and has entered into and affected Christian theology. It there takes the

form of a good God who is supreme, and a bad devil who is inferior.

I was once asked to deliver a graduating address before one of the theological seminaries of this country. An orthodox minister wrote to the authorities of that seminary a letter of protest. "Lyman Abbott," he said, "is little better than an atheist, because he does not believe in a personal devil." I neither believe nor disbelieve in a personal devil. History affords some illustrations of embodied spirits of men so malignant that they might not improperly be called devils; and I am not sure that there may not be in the spiritual world disembodied spirits that also may properly be called devils.

But, if it is true that there are malevolent beings, other than evil men on the earth, who interfere with the benevolent purposes of the Creator, this does not indicate that there is no Creator or that he has no benevolent purposes.

The scientist assumes that there is an intellectual order in the universe, and all his investigations and explorations are directed to find out

what that intellectual order is. The scientist does not create the laws of light, heat, or electricity, he discovers them. He assumes their existence and seeks to comprehend them. Similarly, the moralist assumes that there is a moral order in the universe. He does not create the laws of right and wrong; he seeks to ascertain what they are.

This assumption that there is an intelligent order in the universe involves the assumption that an intelligent being has ordered the universe; this assumption that there is a moral order in the universe involves the assumption that there is a moral being who has ordered the universe. Belief in law involves belief in a lawgiver.

I think it far easier to assume that with my finite mind I am not able to comprehend all the principles of an illimitable universe and an infinite Creator than to believe that there is no order in the illimitable universe and that it is a mere "happenstance." In other words I think, it more reasonable to assume that there are limits to my intellectual and moral wisdom than to

assume that I know it all and the limitation is in the intellectual and moral wisdom of the Creator.

I can, however, see that if there were no dangers to be met there could be no development of courage; if there were no burdens to be borne there could be no development of patience; if there were no difficulties to encounter there could be no development of intelligence. If the object of the Creator is the making of peaches, the illustration of your peach orchard would be a conclusive argument against belief in his intelligence; but if the object of the Creator is the making of men, just such exigencies as occurred in your peach orchard may serve an exceedingly useful purpose in the creation of character.

I make no attempt to solve the problem of evil. But when evils come to me I endeavour to meet them in a spirit, or, if you prefer, with a philosophy, for which I am indebted to Paul: "We glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and

experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts.”

In my life I have rarely, if ever, found any trouble come to me that I could not make use of, if I would meet it in this spirit.

XVIII

THE BIBLE AND THE CHILD

Would you kindly give in your department of "Letters to Unknown Friends" your thought of how the story of the Book of Daniel should be taught to children? Is it right to let the boys and girls think of this story as literally true, or should endeavour be made to give them the lesson it teaches, explaining its true character?

It is a great deal more important that the child should have faith in his mother than that he should have faith in the Bible. And it is certain that if her use of the Bible is characterized by any insincerity or suspicion of insincerity, she will by such use shake not only her child's faith in her but his faith in the book as well. If you believe that such stories as the Elisha stories, the Daniel stories, the Jonah story, are history, as history you should treat them in reading them to your children;

if you believe they are fiction, you should treat them as fiction; and if you do not know what to think, you should frankly acknowledge your uncertainty. Never under any circumstances pretend to a faith which you do not possess. "Any kind of a person," says E. S. Martin, "will do for a parent — except a liar." Children are much keener than we think. They see quickly through shams and false pretensions. They discern the falsehood which is told them because the falsehood is thought to be profitable; and it is not profitable.

This is my general answer to your question. A little more specific answer as to the best method of using the Bible in reading it to children may not be inappropriate.

I think we have belittled the Bible by a false reverence. We have assumed that because it is inspired it cannot be human and because it is true it cannot contain fiction. We have assumed that God is limited in his employment of human faculties for the instruction and elevation of the race, to one or two faculties: that he can speak

to us through the conscience in law, and through observation in history; but we have thought it irreverent to suppose that he can speak to us through the imagination and the fancy, and almost irreverent to think that he can speak to us through the emotions. I hold that the Bible is a collection of Hebrew literature; that it contains law, history, folklore, drama, fiction, poetry, political orations, religious orations, ethical culture addresses. I hold that it is a more divine book because it is a human book, and larger in its range of inspiration because it speaks through every faculty and to every faculty. It would be difficult to find any short stories in literature superior to the books of Ruth and Esther, or any epic poem characterized by profounder genius than the poem of Job, or any ethical culture writings more frank in their elucidation of human experience than the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, or any folklore more naïve than the Elisha stories and the Daniel stories, or any satirical fiction more keen and cutting than the book of Jonah.

I did not always think so. When I held the narrower view of the Bible, I read and interpreted Ruth, Esther, Daniel, Jonah, as histories. Now, in my private reading and in my public ministry, I read them as fiction. It is not necessary always to say, This is history or This is fiction, but it is necessary always to answer with absolute frankness the question of the child who asks you for your opinion, and it is always necessary that that answer should not be tainted with the least suspicion of reserve, hesitation, or insincerity.

I repeat: it is better that the child should lose faith in the Bible than that he should lose faith in his mother; and if he loses faith in his mother's reading of the Bible he will lose faith in the Bible as well.

XIX

THE MINISTER AND THE CREED

VARIOUS ministers have written to me at different times, presenting in somewhat different forms a problem which I think perplexes many, especially of the younger men, in the ministry. The problem is substantially as follows: A young man has devoted himself to the ministry before beginning his theological studies. The result of his theological studies has been to change, perhaps materially, his point of view. He finds himself unable to accept certain of the tenets and certain of the definitions current in the traditional theology of his church. He still desires to preach the glad tidings, he still accepts and desires to proclaim to others Jesus Christ as a Divine Master and Saviour, and to use the Bible as a

guide book in life. But he regards the first chapter of Genesis as a psalm, not as a scientific treatise; the third chapter of Genesis as a parable, not as history. Some of the Bible stories he regards as folklore. For some of the so-called miracles he thinks he can find natural causes, and others he regards as unhistorical, and his spiritual faith does not rest upon the miracles and is not shaken by doubts concerning them. That the whole human race sinned in Adam and fell with him in the great transgression, he does not believe, and redemption has come to him to mean less a recovery from a fall than a divine process of development from a lower to a higher stage in creation. Entertaining these or similar opinions, he doubts whether his church will grant him ordination, or, if he has been ordained and is pastor of a church, he questions whether he ought to go on in the ministry, with theological views widely divergent from those traditionally held by his church and still held more or less tenaciously by many of his ministerial brethren. He is not willing to abandon his ministry, to which indeed

he is more devoted than ever; neither is he willing to be insincere and pretend to beliefs which he does not entertain. I am persuaded that there are a great many young men who are kept from the ministry by some such condition as I have here described, and a great many others who are perplexed as to their duty in the ministry upon which they have already entered and in the course of which their doctrinal views have undergone more or less radical changes. In what follows I will repeat what substantially I have said in probably some score or more of cases in private letter to inquirers.

1. Sincerity is for all of us a fundamental virtue. It is in some sense peculiarly essential to the ministry. Virtue is virtue in every profession, sin is sin in every profession; but there are some virtues more essential in some professions than they are in others. A coward cannot be a soldier, nor a dishonest man a merchant, nor a man lacking in the sense of justice a lawyer, nor a careless man a surgeon. So an insincere man cannot by any possibility have success in the ministry.

He may, as a rhetorician and an actor, secure audiences; but the real power of the minister as a spiritual force depends on his personality, and his personality depends on his absolute truthfulness. There ought to be in our speech no use of words in a double sense, no falsification, no evasions. This is, of course, universally true. But it is a truth which the ministry should hold peculiarly sacred. Professionalism; that is, the utterance of doctrines or the expression of emotions, not because they are real and vital to the speaker, but because he thinks they will be profitable to the congregation, is the bane of the ministry. No minister should ever give any justification or excuse for the question of the little girl, Is it true, or is it only preaching?

2. I do not abate one jot or tittle from this fundamental principle in going on to say that there is danger lest we exaggerate our differences with our fellow Christians, or so express them as to give them undue proportion. The emphasis should always be laid on the spirit, not on the definition. Definitions in theology are always

inadequate, for theology, to be worth anything, must be an experience, and experience is never capable of exact definition. Faith, hope, and love cannot be defined with the exactitude with which a mathematician defines a triangle or a parallelogram, or a chemist defines the constituent elements in water. When a congregation, repeating the Apostles' Creed, says, "I believe in the Resurrection of the body," if careful inquiry were to be made it would probably be found that many different things are meant by this phrase. It is certainly true that many different things have been meant by this phrase in the history of the Church. It may mean that the identical body laid in the grave will rise from the grave again. It may mean that the spirit will be clothed with a body which has some not well comprehended connection with the body laid in the grave, as the oak has connection with the acorn from which it springs. It may mean that every man has a spiritual body, subtle, undefinable, unrecognizable by science, which is released by death and rises into the spiritual world. It may simply mean be-

lief in personal immortality, as distinguished from belief in absorption into the Infinite. All these opinions have been meant by the phrase in the history of the Church, and probably most if not all of them are more or less vaguely meant by different members of the congregation in their reciting of the Creed. In other words, our creeds are not intended to be theological definitions; they are intended, like the hymns we sing, to be expressions of a vital, spiritual experience.

It is of great importance that we of the liberal faith should recognize the fact that all theological definitions are inadequate, because all spiritual experiences are undefinable, and that we should put our emphasis, not on our doubts or our differences, but on our faiths and our agreements with our brethren. Nor is this merely a prudential maxim; it is a principle that should be carried out in all our life. I think, for example, that Protestants have greatly over-emphasized our differences with our Roman Catholic brethren, and I think the very word Protestant is for this reason unfortunate. I am at one with my

Roman Catholic brother in my faith in one God, a God of justice and of mercy, in my faith in the forgiveness of sins, in my faith in the revelation which he has made to us in the life and teachings of his son, Jesus Christ, and he is continually making to us in our spiritual experiences of fellowship with him; and these agreements with my Roman Catholic brother are far more important than my dissent from his interpretation of the Church and the Sacraments. I would not deny or conceal my dissent, but I would put emphasis on my agreement.

How wisely to adjust these two principles, how to be absolutely sincere without overestimating the differences, how to emphasize agreements without a suspicion of insincerity, is a difficult problem. I think it can only be solved by the possession of a spirit which desires to find agreement rather than disagreement, but which also desires to find it through methods of sincerity, not through methods of concealment or false pretence.

3. It is not the duty of a minister to depart

from his denomination because he thinks himself to be more or less in disagreement with its traditional doctrines. If he thinks that he can be of more spiritual efficiency; that he can do more for building up the Kingdom of Righteousness and Peace and Joy and Divine Companionship in a different church fellowship from that in which he has been brought up, he should certainly make the change. But mere theological disagreement with the church of his fathers constitutes no reason for his voluntarily leaving it. Jesus Christ differed radically in his conception and interpretation of the religious life from that prevalent in the general synagogue teaching of his time, but he continued preaching in the synagogue until he was turned out. Luther did not leave the Roman Catholic Church until the Roman Catholic Church refused to allow him to remain in its communion. John Wesley never withdrew from the Episcopal Church, though the Episcopal churches very generally refused to allow him to preach in their pulpits.

These are safe examples for the modern

minister to follow. It is both right and wise for him to leave his associates to decide whether the difference in opinion is so great that they desire to put an end to his ministerial fellowship with them. The church and the ministry are increasingly inclined to make the basis of such fellowship unity in the spirit rather than intellectual agreement, and those who find themselves not in full intellectual agreement should aid to promote, rather than to check this tendency. For my part, I am glad to work in fellowship with any one who is working to promote the kingdom of God on the earth, whatever may be the intellectual differences between himself and myself, provided he is willing to work with me. But I am not willing to misinterpret or to conceal my opinions. There can be no real spiritual fellowship the foundations of which are not laid in absolute sincerity.

XX

FUTURE PUNISHMENT

Do you believe in a personal devil and eternal punishment?

Do you believe that it is possible to be "possessed by devils?"

Do you accept the annihilation theory as regards the ultimate end of the irreconcilably wicked?

How do you interpret the declaration of Jesus Christ in Matthew XXV, 46: "These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

ANSWERING these questions directly, I reply: I do not know whether there is a personal devil or not. But since there are malignant spirits in the body doing and seeking to do evil, I see no reason to doubt that there may be such malignant spirits disembodied; nor any reason to doubt that they may exert a certain influence over us in life, an influence, however, which we can and ought to resist. And I think it quite possible that some cases of so-called moral insanity are really due to the yielding

of the individual to the evil spirit or evil spirits, until by yielding the individual has lost the power of self-control.

I have long since abandoned belief that any child of God, created in his image, will live forever in sin and suffering. I do not believe that any one has life independent of God, and I do not believe that God will keep any one alive eternally who is going on in sin and for whom there is no hope of redemption.

In the passage in Matthew quoted above, the words "everlasting" and "eternal" are translations of the same Greek word, and the Revised Version gives a truer translation of the text. The Revised Version reads "eternal" punishment and "eternal" life. Destruction would be, however, an everlasting punishment; that is, it would be a punishment from which there would be and could be no deliverance.

The Scriptures have much less to say about a future life than is perhaps generally supposed. The early books of the Old Testament make no

reference to life after death. There is no reason to suppose that the Hebrew people prior to the exile had any more definite conception of future life than was possessed by other peoples. The references to life beyond death, even in the later prophets, are few and generally enigmatical. It was Jesus Christ who brought life and immortality to light, and in the teachings of Jesus Christ and of the apostles' portrayals of the future life are comparatively infrequent, and they are generally vague. Only in the Book of Revelation is there any attempt to picture either a heaven of rewards or a hell of punishment. The only exception to this statement is furnished by the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, in the sixteenth chapter of Luke.

No one would think of taking literally the pictures of heaven given in the Book of Revelation. No one supposes that heaven is really a walled city with golden pavements and pearly gates. It is difficult to see why the church should have taken more literally the pictures of hell contained in the Book of Revelation.

When in that Book the author declares that he saw One like unto the Son of Man in the midst of the seven candlesticks, no one imagines that Jesus Christ dwells or dwelt in a candlestick. The language is symbolical and simply signifies that Jesus Christ dwells in his Church. There is just as little reason for taking literally the statement that the beast and the prophet both "were cast alive in a lake of fire burning with brimstone." Yet for some reason difficult to understand, preachers have taken some of the symbols in this book as symbols and others as literal descriptions.

In my grandfather's house was a family Bible illustrated. One of the illustrations accompanied the counsel of Christ, "Why heedest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but seest not the beam that is in thine own eye." The picture represented two men talking with one another, with a beam of wood protruding two or three feet in length from the eye of one of them. Perhaps it was this preposterous picture that had the effect early to set my mind against the literal interpretation of the Oriental imagery in the Bible.

The references in the Bible to the future life are not for the purpose of giving us exact information respecting that life. Indeed it would be impossible to give such information. We can as little comprehend what the future life is to be as an unhatched bird in the egg could imagine what the life of the bird is to be on the wing, or the caterpillar creeping upon the ground could imagine what the life of the butterfly is to be in the air, or a little child in the nursery could comprehend what are to be the joys and the sorrows of manhood. The references of the Bible are for the purpose of giving warning and inspiring hope. They are addressed to the imagination, not to the intellect. Their object is not to give us instruction in the geography of another world, but to supply us with motive for conduct in this world.

The vagueness, therefore, is not only unavoidable, it is also desirable. It would be not to our advantage but to our disadvantage to have accurate knowledge respecting either heaven or hell. The wise father, when he gives a command

to his child, does not add the threat, "If you disobey me I will whip you." He leaves the child to understand that disobedience will be followed by suffering and obedience by reward. But he does not define the suffering and he rarely defines the reward. In civil government it is necessary to define the suffering because otherwise the State would put too much power in the hands of the judge appointed to try the culprit. Punishments, therefore, in civil government must be defined, and to some extent this principle is applicable to schools as well. But this definition of punishment and reward is a distinct defect in government, due to the infirmity of mankind. The Heavenly Father gives no such definition. The text referred to in one of the questions given above illustrates this method of Scripture. Christ declares that the righteous shall go into eternal life and the wicked into eternal punishment; but he defines neither the one nor the other.

It is true that on more than one occasion Jesus referred to hell as a punishment, but the meaning of the word hell in the New Testament is some-

thing very different from the meaning of the same word in mediæval theology. Hell in our English New Testament is used to translate two Greek words, one Hades, the other Gehenna. Hades means simply the abode of the dead, and might not inappropriately be rendered by the simple word *death*. Gehenna was a valley outside of Jerusalem to which the refuse of the city was carried and where it was cast upon a fire kept always burning for the purpose of consuming this refuse. By the term "hell fire" Jesus meant, and would have been understood by his hearers to mean, the fire burning in this valley. It was a symbol, not of torture, but of destruction. When he says to the Pharisees who devoured widows' houses and for a pretence made long prayers, "How can ye escape the damnation of hell?" what he meant, and what he would have been understood by his hearers to mean, was, How can you, false pretenders, who pride yourselves on your religion, escape being cast out as the refuse of the universe, to be destroyed? Fire is used almost invariably in Scripture, except in the

Book of Revelation, as a symbol either of purification or of destruction; almost never as a symbol of torment. Any reader with a Concordance can easily verify this statement.

Jesus Christ never endeavoured to frighten men into paths of righteousness, nor did he seek to win them to paths of righteousness by promises of reward. The notion that so much virtue should receive so much pay he distinctly and emphatically repudiated.

He told his disciples on more than one occasion that if they were to follow him they must take up their cross, they must suffer, they must expect tribulations. On one occasion Peter asked him, "What shall we have for following thee?" Jesus replied with the parable of the householder hiring labourers for the vineyard. To those who had worked all day long and to those who had worked only one hour in the day the householder gave the same wage, a penny or denarius. Goodness of character is not a commercial article to be paid for by the square yard. A child's service to his Heavenly Father is not to be paid for at so

much an hour. Goodness is to be sought for its own sake, and service is to be rendered in the spirit of love for the joy of serving.

The point of view which I am here attempting to give to my readers is abundantly confirmed by the history of the Christian Church. To attempt to convert men to the service of Christ by scaring them with threats of hell or enticing them with promises of the rewards of heaven, has never accomplished permanent results. The religion of the Middle Ages in Europe, the religion of early Puritanism in England, both of which were largely founded on the motives of fear of punishment and hope of reward, do not furnish the highest types of religious life and experience. In the reactions against the literalism of the past we may be in danger of going too far in the other direction; but on the whole it is safe to say that a present world religion is better for humanity than a future world religion, if we must choose between the two. The ideal is a present world religion inspired by the profound consciousness that this world and the other world, the present

life and the future life, are all one, and that we shall carry, when we cross the threshold into the other world, the character which we have formed here and the memory of the deeds we have done here.

To me there is no vision of the future more awe-inspiring than that suggested by the single utterance of Jesus in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus: "Son, remember."

XXI

DOES HIS MERCY ENDURE FOREVER ?

In your article in the *Outlook* of August 17th, in which you give your "Confession of Faith," you make the statement that "The dogma that it is only in this life that man can repent, or mercy can be shown him if he does repent, I repudiate as unscriptural and inconsistent with faith in the Fatherhood of God and in the freedom of man." Will you please state what Scripture gives us ground for belief that there is any chance for repentance after death? If so, then why the great need of efforts to lead the unconverted to repentance and to God in this life? Also, why trouble about the heathen for their sakes or for ours, on account of the great commission, if after death we find our souls suffering on account of lack of duty neglected in this life, we can repent and be sorry and be removed to a place of joy? This would be reasonable along this line of belief, would it not? My dear son, who is thinking of being a preacher, and is now in college, says, "Why, what is the need of me preaching or father staying all his life with the heathen if they have another chance?" His father is a foreign missionary; has been for nearly forty years.

YOUR letter assumes that Jesus Christ came to keep us out of hell and get us into heaven.

But Jesus Christ did not come to keep us out of hell and get us into heaven. He came to keep hell out of us and put heaven into us. He came to save us — yes! but from what? Pain? No! He suffered the death of the cross, and told us we must take up our cross if we would be his. What then? From punishment? No! It is doubtful if he anywhere promises his disciples escape from punishment. He came to save them that will trust in him from their sins. One Evangelist tells us that he was called Jesus because he would save his people from their sins. Another Evangelist tells us that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. John the Baptist hails Jesus as the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. He himself in his last meeting with his disciples, pledging them in a cup after supper, says that this cup is the blood of the new covenant, shed for the remission of sins. It is sin, not punishment, which is remitted or sent away; it is from sin, not from punishment, that his blood relieves us; it is sin, not punishment, that the Lamb of God takes away from the world;

it is from sin, not punishment, that Jesus saves his people.

That he saves from penalty in saving from sin is secondary and incidental.

And this is the commission he gave to his disciples: Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained. He does not promise that they shall deliver from punishment, but that they shall deliver from sin.

Salvation is character. Understand me. I do not say salvation through character. No! *Salvation is character.*

Two counterfeiters are sent to State's prison for ten years. One has political influence, and after three months gets a pardon, goes out, and resumes his counterfeiting. The other serves out his full ten years, pays the full penalty of his crime, but becomes an honest man and comes out to live an honest life. The first man escapes punishment and is not saved. The second man suffers punishment and is saved.

SALVATION IS CHARACTER.

The word Christianity does not occur in the New Testament. The word religion does not occur at all in the Gospels. Christ's word for his gift to us is "Life" or "Eternal Life." "I have come that they might have Life, and that they might have it more abundantly." "I give unto them Eternal Life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of my hand." Similarly, Paul: "The gift of God is Eternal Life."

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." That Jesus Christ might inspire in men this life he was born, lived, suffered, died. This is what the preacher of the Glad Tidings has to offer to his congregation, and the missionary to the heathen as their inheritance.

He says to them: You are perhaps agnostics. You believe that there must be some sort of intelligence behind nature, but you know not what it is. I have come to introduce your Father to you. You can, if you will, have him as your "Great Companion." Or perhaps you are afraid of God. You think he is angry with you because

you have sinned. You are mistaken. He pities you because you have sinned. And he wants to help you to sin no more. Or perhaps you think it is hard to find him. You are mistaken. Turn toward him and you will find him a Father who goes out to meet you, not with punishment, not with reproaches, but with the gladness of love. Or you have thought that you must offer a sacrifice to appease his wrath or satisfy his law. You are mistaken. His is the sacrifice. It is the mother who suffers for her sinful child; the patriot who suffers for his careless country; the martyr who suffers for his age; God who suffers for his children. This is the Gospel. Not that God will let you off from punishment if you are sorry and promise not to do so any more, but that God will pour his life into you, here and now, and make you partaker of his nature, if you will let him do so.

Do you remember Tennyson's prayer?

"O for a man arise in me,
That the man that I am may cease to be!"

The Gospel is God's answer to that prayer.

I advise your son to write to the Missionary Boards of the five great Protestant denominations for reports of their medical and educational work. He will find that the "life of God in the soul of man," which constitutes the Christian religion, is social as well as individual, a life of human brotherhood as well as of loyalty to the Father. He will find that the Christian missions are carrying health and healing to the body, and inspiration to the mind. He will find that they are abolishing slavery, emancipating woman, lessening cruelty to children, elevating the home, promoting the spirit of peace and good-will. He will find that the Christian colleges in Turkey have revolutionized the educational system of Turkey, and that the Christian colleges in China have revolutionized the educational system in China. And he will find that, while doing this, and by doing this, they have established a religion of hope for one of dread, a religion of joy for one of torment, a religion of love for one of fear. Is there, then, no future life, no eternity? Yes! but future life begins here, and we are in eternity now.

He who will study with an open mind the history of Christian missions will find that the response of the emancipated souls in every land has been the response so beautifully interpreted by Phillips Brooks:

“Where children pure and happy
Pray to the blessèd Child;
Whose misery cries out to Thee,
Son of the Mother mild;
Where Charity stands watching,
And Faith holds wide the door —
The dark night wakes, the glory breaks,
And Christmas comes once more.”

To dispel the darkness of the night and bring in the glory of the dawn upon this earth is the mission of the Gospel.

THE END

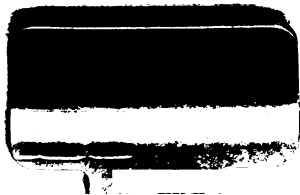


**THE COUNTRY LIFE PRESS
GARDEN CITY, N. Y.**

89097194047



b89097194047a



89097194047



B89097194047A